

IN CONTRADICTION WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Government acknowledges lack of conditions for the safe return of families to the village of Mocímboa da Praia

- On March 3, the district secretariat of Mocímboa da Praia informed the Palma district government that as of March 6 it would start moving displaced families who are in Quitunda and Maganja (Palma) to Mocímboa da Praia district. The Governor of Cabo Delgado also reiterated on March 7 that those populations would soon return to their areas of origin in Mocímboa da Praia.



- Last week a Council of Ministers brigade working in Cabo Delgado stated that conditions are still in place for the return of displaced populations to their areas of origin. Failures in the consolidation of security; absence of State officials, including district administrators; lack of means of transport and work; lack of cleanliness of towns and villages and social infrastructures yet to be rehabilitated are pointed out as the reasons for the postponement of the return of displaced populations to their areas of origin.
- Last Sunday (March 13), TotalEnergies' Director in Mozambique, Maxime Rabilloud, visited the port of Mocímboa da Praia to assess the conditions of the infrastructure in order to decide on the restart of dredging activities. The aim is to allow the access of cargo vessels to supply the northern districts of Cabo Delgado and, in the future, the natural gas project (Mozambique LNG) led by the French oil company Total.
- Meanwhile, violent extremists continue to conduct attacks against civilians and Defence and Security Forces positions, especially in Macomia district. In recent days, at least five (5) civilians and three (3) members of the Defence and Security Forces have been reported killed in attacks in Nova Zambézia village in Macomia.

Less than a two weeks ago, the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff of the Armed Forces of Mozambique (FADM), Bertolino Capatine, announced that the displaced populations will soon return to their places of origin in the district of Mocímboa da Praia, in Cabo Delgado. These are thousands of families who in August 2020 left the municipal village of Mocímboa da Praia and other villages following the assault perpetrated by violent extremists.

The municipal village of Mocímboa da Praia, the most important and strategic urban centre in northern Cabo Delgado, was occupied by violent extremists for almost a year. Its recovery was only possible thanks to the intervention of Rwandan troops, who entered the town at 11am on 8 August 2021. Six months after the village's recovery, thousands of people intend to return to their homes to resume their lives interrupted by violent extremism.

Having said several times by the government that there were still no security conditions for the return of the civilian population, a senior FADM official announced a few days ago that the return was coming soon. "We will determine the time and the moment when the community should return and the media will be invited to witness this great act. It is only from there that we will announce and communicate to the government authorities in order to invite the communities to return to Mocímboa, because it is in the interest of the Mozambican State to see



Mocímboa doing what it used to do," said the Deputy Chief of General Staff of FADM, quoted by daily newspaper Notícias ¹.

The Governor of Cabo Delgado also appeared to announce that the population of Mocímboa da Praia who have been (over)living in displacement centres for over a year would soon return to their areas of origin. Valige Tauabo made these statements on March 7 while addressing the celebrations of the 63rd anniversary of the elevation of Mocímboa da Praia to the category of town. Besides

ensuring that the security conditions for the return of the population were created, he highlighted the reinstatement of some public services such as electricity, mobile phone networks and water supply ².

On March 3, the district secretariat of Mocímboa da Praia sent a letter to the Palma district government informing that as of March 6 it would start moving displaced families from Quitunda and Maganja (Palma) to Mocímboa da Praia district. But so far only half a hundred officials and agents of the State,

¹ <https://www.jornalnoticias.co.mz/politica/mocimboa-da-praia-populacao-de-regressa-as-zonas-de-origem/>

² <https://e-global.pt/noticias/lusofonia/mocambique-governador-de-cabo-delgado-anuncia-para-breve-regresso-da-populacao-deslocada-a-mocimboa-da-praia/>

out of more than a thousand, are providing services in the municipal town of Mocimboa da Praia.

Moreover, the absence of officials and State agents, including administrators and permanent secretaries, in the districts affected by violent extremism is one of the reasons that led the Council of Ministers' delegation to declare that the conditions for the return of displaced populations to their areas of origin are still in place.

The Minister of Labour and Social Security, who headed the central Government delegation that went to the districts affected by violent extremism to assess the existing conditions for the populations' return, pointed out the lack of means of transport and work, as well as of cleanliness of the towns and villages as other factors that make the return of the displaced families unfeasible.

"Some prejudices still persist on the part of public officials. We understand that there is a trauma due to what they went through and we recognise the urgent need for rehabilitation of infrastructures and allocation of means of work, especially circulating means, including ambulances", said Margarida Talapa, the Minister who headed the Council of Ministers delegation that last week worked in northern Cabo Delgado³. The Minister confirmed that the movement of the population of Mocimboa da Praia who took refuge in the Afungi peninsula, in Palma, has not been carried out yet, due to the lack of conditions for that purpose.

According to the newspaper Carta de Moçambique⁴, Talapa also referred to the existence of what she called "failures in the consolidation of security in the affected areas" by violent extremism. In fact, despite the recovery of district towns, administrative posts and villages by the joint forces of Mozambique, Rwanda and SADC, violent extremism is still present in Cabo Delgado.

In recent weeks several attacks have been reported, mainly in Macomia district. For example, on 3 March, violent extremists attacked the Nova Zambézia village, where they killed at least five (5) people and set fire to 11 houses. Nova Zambézia is a village in the administrative post of Chai, Macomia district, which is located on National Road No. 380, the main road linking the city of Pemba (capital of Cabo Delgado) to the district of Palma, the epicentre of liquefied natural gas



Accompanied by the Governor of Cabo Delgado, the Director of TotalEnergies in Mozambique visited the port of Mocimboa da Praia last Sunday

projects⁵.

Still on the occurrence of attacks, on 9 March a group of violent extremists returned to the Nova Zambézia village, this time to attack a Defence and Security Forces position, killing three (3) troops members. The newspaper Carta de Moçambique, in its 14 March edition, noted that this was the second attack on the position of the Mozambican forces in that region in less than 20 days. Another attack on this position took place in the village of Namuembe, in the district of Nangade, last Friday (11 March). No casualties were re-

ported in this last attack, but it was reported that the attackers stole military equipment⁶.

In late January, the President of TotalEnergies, Patrick Pouyanné, expressed confidence in the resumption of the natural gas project (Mozambique LNG) led by the French oil company, which has been suspended for almost a year, after the violent attack on the village of Palma in April 2021. On a visit to Mozambique, Patrick Pouyanné made it clear that there were still no concrete dates for the resumption of Total's project budgeted at about USD 23 billion, the largest foreign di-

³ <https://cartamz.com/index.php/politica/item/10202-ataques-em-cabo-delgado-governo-diz-ser-cedo-ainda-para-o-regresso-da-populacao-as-suas-aldeias>

⁴ <https://cartamz.com/index.php/politica/item/10202-ataques-em-cabo-delgado-governo-diz-ser-cedo-ainda-para-o-regresso-da-populacao-as-suas-aldeias>

⁵ <https://cartamz.com/index.php/sociedade/item/10179-terroristas-voltam-a-atacar-posicao-das-fds-em-macomia-e-matam-tres-soldados>

⁶ <https://cartamz.com/index.php/sociedade/item/10179-terroristas-voltam-a-atacar-posicao-das-fds-em-macomia-e-matam-tres-soldados>

rect investment in Africa⁷.

“I am optimistic that I can return to Mozambique, but next time not to Maputo. My next visit will be to Palma, Mocímboa da Praia, in Mueda and when I see that life is back to normal, which means restoring state services and the population, only then can the project resume. My aim is still to resume in 2022”, said TotalEnergies’ top representative⁸.

Last Sunday (March 13), that top representative from TotalEnergies in Mozambique, in the company of the Governor of Cabo Delgado, Valige Tauabo, visited the Mocímboa da Praia port to assess the conditions of that infrastructure in order to decide on the restart of dredging activities. The aim is to allow cargo vessels to access that port to supply the northern districts of Cabo Delgado

and, in the future, the natural gas (Mozambique LNG) project led by French oil company Total⁹. The port of Mocímboa da Praia, the only one in northern Cabo Delgado, was one of the infrastructures targeted by violent extremists during the armed attacks in August 2020 that culminated with the occupation of the municipal town for a period of one year

⁷ <https://www.rfi.fr/pt/mo%3%A7ambique/20220201-mo%3%A7ambique-presidente-da-total-confiante-quanto-%3%A0-retoma-de-projectos-de-g%3%A1s>

⁸ <https://www.rfi.fr/pt/mo%3%A7ambique/20220201-mo%3%A7ambique-presidente-da-total-confiante-quanto-%3%A0-retoma-de-projectos-de-g%3%A1s>


⁹ <https://zitamar.com/totalenergies-mozambique-head-visits-mocimboa-da-praia-port/>



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