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CDD at Maputo Central Prison to investigate the deaths of 33 inmates during mass escape

- The Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (CDD) is conducting monitoring work at the Maputo Central Prison to closely and directly investigate the circumstances surrounding the 33 deaths recorded on the afternoon of December 25, 2024. On this day, over 2,000 inmates escaped from the Maputo Central Prison, with some also fleeing the Maximum Security Prison, known as BO.



Confirmed Deaths and CDD's Access to the Prison

During the visit, yesterday, Monday, January 6, the CDD confirmed on the ground the existence of 33 fatalities and obtained authorization to visit the prison with the aim of understanding the circumstances under which these deaths occurred. The investigation includes analyzing the position of the Rapid Intervention Unit (UIR) forces at the time of the shootings:

- From what distance were the shots fired?
- What was the position of the inmates?
- In what state or movement were the inmates?

Context and Allegations

Preliminary information suggests that the fleeing inmates were armed and had taken three prison guards hostage — one man and two women. Reports indicate that some of the inmates moved from BO to the Central Prison, where they reportedly acquired two additional firearms, which were then used to fire at prison guards. Despite this, no injuries or fatalities were reported among the guards.

Accounts suggest that the intervention by the prison guards prompted UIR agents to cease firing as their actions posed a risk to the guards themselves. However, the deaths of 33 inmates were confirmed, but the lack of documentation and evidence leaves many questions unanswered, requiring more thorough forensic examinations.

Absence of Evidence and Documentation

The Central Prison reported that it does not have photographs of the victims scattered across the site or of the moment their bodies were collected. There are no records indicating:

- The position in which the bodies were found;
- The number of bullet wounds on each of the victims.

Additionally, no forensic work was carried out at the site to gather crucial information that could clarify the circumstances of the deaths. Furthermore, there are indications that key elements for building evidence were removed before any independent verification took place.

Lack of Independent Verification

During the incident, no civil society organizations, the Red Cross, or other relevant entities were invited to observe or verify the conditions in which the victims were found. The absence of independent witnesses raises concerns about the integrity of the investigations conducted thus far.

Next Steps

The CDD intends to obtain legal authorization to initiate a more in-depth investigation on the ground. This effort includes the exhaustive documentation of the events, aiming to establish accountability and fully understand the circumstances that led to the loss of human lives.

Transparency, accountability, and respect for human rights are essential to ensuring justice for the victims and their families.





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