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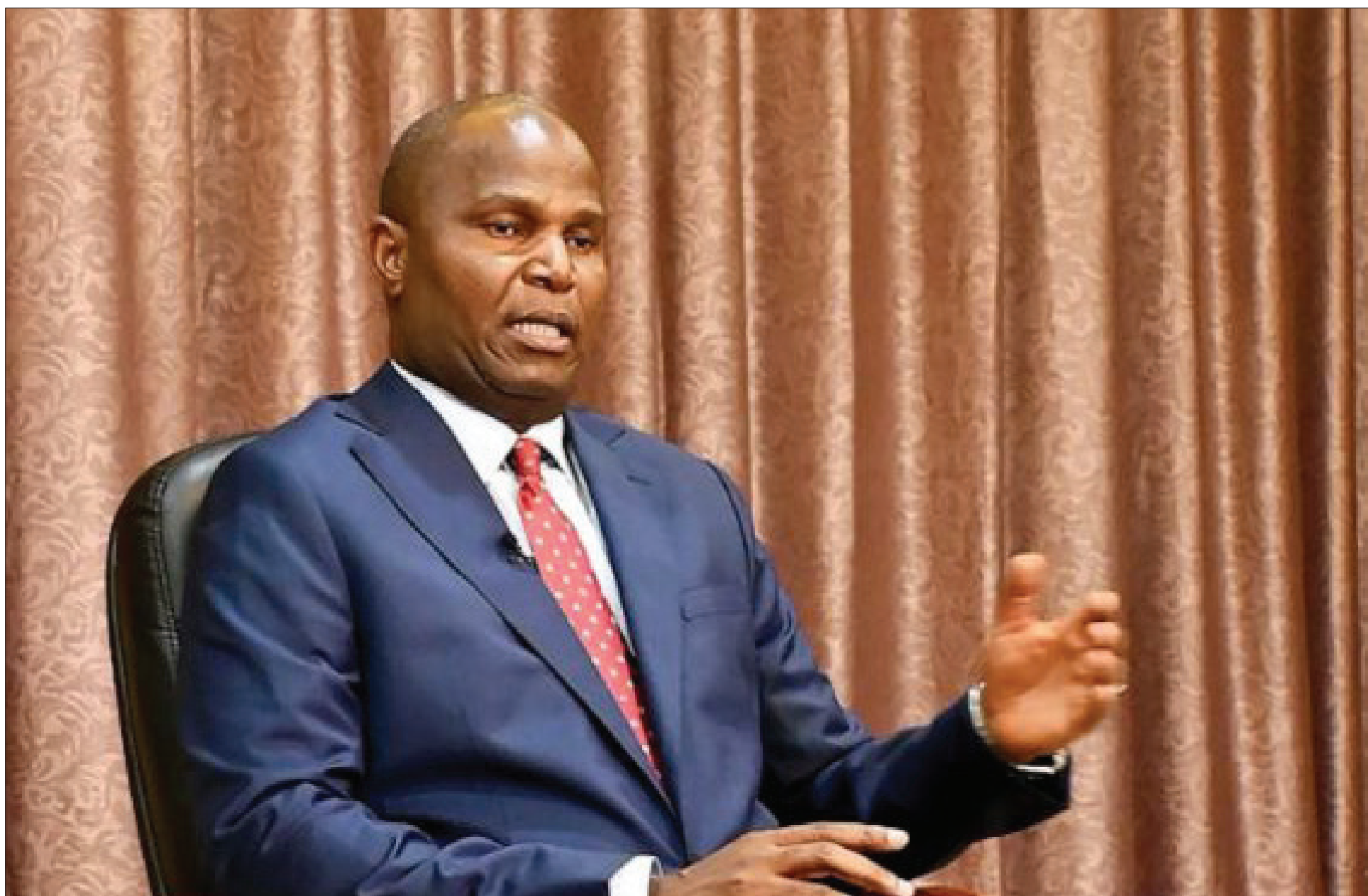
POLÍTICA MOÇAMBICANA

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DANIEL CHAPO

How do we combat organized crime in a system controlled by criminals?

- Today, Monday, January 27, 2025, marks 17 days since Daniel Chapo's inauguration ceremony as President of the Republic (PR), the fifth in the country's history, and the fourth since the establishment of democracy in 1994. Some applauded his inaugural speech due to the understanding that it represents a break with the governance of his predecessors, with particular emphasis on Filipe Nyusi, whom he succeeded in Ponta Vermelha. Among Chapo's many promises, is the commitment to combating organized crime, among which kidnappings and drug trafficking stand out.



Available information points to Mozambique as a corridor, a place of production and consumption of drugs. In recent years, the crime of kidnapping has been consolidating itself in the face of an increasingly weak or weakened State. Studies and international organizations show that organized crime thrives due to the involvement of the government and political elite in the world of crime. State institutions, includ-

ing the Attorney General's Office (PGR), have identified the involvement of politically exposed persons as a significant obstacle to the government's efforts in combating organized crime.

Chapo is the General Secretary of Frelimo, the party for which he ran for the PR position. In the coming days, the president of this party should be confirmed. By ascending to the highest position in the leadership of Frelimo,

he gains more powers to run the State autonomously, which allows him to implement the changes he intends, including the fight against organized crime. However, none of his predecessors managed to combat organized crime, which over time consolidated to the point of creating tentacles in the most sensitive sectors of the State. Researcher Joseph Hanlon associates drug trafficking, for example, with the Presidency of the Republic.

Drugs and connections with the government and party elite

The judge-advisor and vice-president of the Supreme Court (TS) João Beirão said in May last year that Mozambique was a drug corridor¹ and placed the country alongside states such as Kenya, Afghanistan, Pakistan, South Africa, Brazil and Ethiopia.

On the occasion, Beirão expressed concern about the fact that, despite the State intensifying prevention activities aimed at reducing the demand for drugs by users, reinforcing prevention and combat legislation, and worsening the punishment of criminals, drug trafficking is on the rise.

Data from the latest report by the Attorney General's Office (PGR) shows an increase in seizures of amphetamines, methamphetamines and other drugs, which reveals that the country has become a production site for these substances. The PGR reported that in 2023, there were 1,245 recorded cases of trafficking and consumption of narcotics, psychotropic substances, precursors, and preparations. Notably, 20 of these cases had international connections. This represents an increase of 208 cases, or 20.3%, compared to the 1,035 cases recorded during the same period in the previous year.

A report by the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime published in 2022 indicates that in Southern Africa, the ports of Pemba and Nacala are among the

most important for drug trafficking. According to this report, countries in Eastern and Southern Africa may be receiving more drugs than Latin America. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime warned in 2019 that Mozambique had become a corridor for large volumes of illicit substances, mainly heroin, and recommended greater international cooperation for prevention.

Prominent South African analyst Moeletsi Mbeki said in 2022 that heroin trafficking to South Africa was flourishing thanks to the facilities provided by Frelimo, the party in power in Mozambique since independence. In 2010, then-US President Barack Obama designated Mohamed Bachir Suleman a drug "lord". It is public knowledge that MBS has been one of the main financiers of Frelimo campaigns since the days of Joaquim Chissano. It is believed that this funding is a way of "massaging" the system to continue to guarantee protection.

The drug trade generates millions of dollars, much of which is believed to finance the Frelimo party. A 2018 study by Joseph Hanlon, titled "*Heroin Remains One of the Largest Exports*," estimates that between 10 and 40 tons of heroin—or possibly more—are trafficked through Mozambique annually, with an export value of approximately \$20 million per ton. The study further suggests

that at least \$2 million per ton remains in Mozambique, distributed as profits, bribes, and payments to high-ranking Mozambican officials.

Hélder Injonjo, a Frelimo deputy² and former first vice-president of the Assembly of the Republic, is identified as a drug lord, following the drugs seized in 2022 at the Port of Macuse, in Zambézia.

Last year, during the opening of the Judicial Year, the former Attorney General of the Republic, Beatriz Buchili, said that the involvement of police officers, magistrates, lawyers and politicians compromised the fight against drug trafficking and consumption.

Renowned researcher Joseph Hanlon links the³ drug business to the Presidency of the Republic. In an August 2024 publication cited by the digital newspaper *Canalmoz*, Joseph Hanlon asserts that the drug trade has been managed from within the Presidency of the Republic—specifically, the office of the President. At the time, this implicated former President Filipe Nyusi and, currently, Daniel Chapo. Hanlon claims that Nyusi was fully aware of this operation, which has allegedly been headquartered in the Presidency for decades. This assertion also implicates former Presidents Joaquim Chissano and Armando Guebuza as having knowledge of the operation.

Kidnappings: A State Business

Mozambique has been plagued since 2011 by the crime of kidnapping, the main victims of which are businesspeople, most of whom are of Asian descent. Data from March last year indicate that since 2011 the country has recorded 185 cases⁴ of kidnapping and at least 288 people have been arrested on suspicion of involvement in this type of crime. Since March, the number of kidnappings has

increased, with two cases reported so far this year alone. Former President Filipe Nyusi had promised to establish an anti-kidnapping brigade. However, as of January 15th, when he left office, no details or progress regarding this initiative have been made public.

Since 2011, no one has been arrested for the kidnappings. As with drug trafficking, the crime of kidnapping only thrives because

important people in the State are involved. The former Attorney General of the Republic, Beatriz Buchili has already denounced the involvement of agents from the National Criminal Investigation Service (SERNIC) in the kidnappings, as well as magistrates and lawyers.

During last year's opening ceremony of the Judicial Year, Beatriz Buchili highlighted that the lack of institutional integrity and wide-

¹ <https://cddmoz.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Tribunal-Supremo-traca-cenario-sombrio-sobre-o- trafico-de-drogas-e-mostra-sobrecao-com-o-crescimento-do-mal-que-colocou-o-Estado-de-joelhos.pdf>

² <https://cddmoz.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Beatriz-Buchili-deve-parar-de-se-lamentar-e-atacar-os-grandes-baroes-da-droga-dentro-da-Frelimo-porque-tem-mecanismos-para-o-fazer.pdf>

³ <https://cddmoz.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Joseph-Hanlon-associa-negocio-da-droga-a-Presidencia-da-Republica-.pdf>

⁴ https://www.rtp.pt/noticias/mundo/reino-unido-alerta-para-risco-de-rapto-em-mocambique_n1574973

spread corruption have been exploited by organized crime to expand its influence. This extends to the police, the judiciary—including the courts, the Public Prosecutor’s Office, and judicial administrative bodies—as well as tax and customs authorities, the legal profession, politics, the economy, and society as a whole. She emphasized that this manipulation undermines institutional agendas and compromises the State.

The “at ease” with which the kidnappers operate, the fact that the victims are almost always released upon payment of ransom, as well as the fact that to date we have not been able to identify at least one person who ordered⁵ the kidnappings, suggests that there is no interest in combating the evil, which consolidates the idea that kidnappings are a⁶ state business.

Although Chapo appears determined—at

least in his rhetoric—to combat organized crime, the involvement of government and party elites, which he now leads, in criminal networks could pose a significant obstacle to his efforts. This leaves Chapo with two options: either continue pursuing reforms that directly challenge organized crime, effectively confronting or dismantling the system, or capitulate to these forces, thereby maintaining the status quo.

⁵ <https://cddmoz.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/E-fundamental-chegar-se-aos-mandantes-dos-raptos-se-o-Estado-quiser-combater-o-mal.pdf>

⁶ https://cddmoz.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Um-crime-de-Estado_-1.pdf



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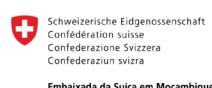
EDITORIAL INFORMATION:

Property: CDD – CENTRO PARA DEMOCRACIA E DIREITOS HUMANOS
Director: Prof. Adriano Nuvunga
Editor: André Mulungo
Author: CDD
Layout: CDD

Address:
 Rua de Dar-Es-Salaam Nº 279, Bairro da Sommerschild, Cidade de Maputo.
 Telefone: +258 21 085 797

Twitter: CDD_moz
E-mail: info@cddmoz.org
Website: <http://www.cddmoz.org>

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