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NO TRUTH, NO PEACE:

Pathways to Transitional Justice in Mozambique



Introduction

Under the title *Truth and Justice for Post-Election Human Rights Violations in Mozambique*, a high-level webinar was held on March 11, 2025, to reflect on possible pathways to transitional justice in Mozambique, in light of the serious human rights violations that marked the post-electoral period. The event was organized by human rights and social justice organizations, with

institutional support from the African Union, bringing together national, regional, and international experts, as well as civil society representatives.

The main objective of the initiative was to raise national and international awareness about the urgency of addressing the abuses committed after the October 2024 elections, and to promote an in-depth debate on mechanisms for accountability, repara-

tions for victims, and long-term institutional reforms. The webinar provided a pluralistic and qualified space to discuss solutions rooted in the principles of transitional justice, as outlined by the African Union Transitional Justice Policy adopted in 2019.

Among the panelists were renowned figures such as Alice Mogwe (President of FIDH), Dzikamai Bere (Zimbabwe Human Rights Association), Annah Moyo (Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation), Zenalda Machado (Human Rights Watch), Prof. Tim Murithi (Institute for Justice and Reconciliation - IJR), and Dr. John Ikubaje (African Union Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security).

The Mozambican context described during the event is deeply alarming. Since the electoral process, the country has faced a growing wave of violence and institutional repression, with reports

of disproportionate use of force against peaceful protesters, extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests, digital censorship, and systematic intimidation of journalists, activists, and opposition members. It is estimated that over 500 people have been killed, with hundreds injured and thousands unlawfully detained — including children and adolescents.

In light of this scenario, participants unanimously agreed that the State's response can no longer be omission or repression, but rather the construction of an inclusive and participatory transitional justice process, based on truth, accountability, reparations for victims, and institutional reform. This is a decisive moment for Mozambique — a turning point that could determine the future of peace, democracy, and social cohesion in the country.

The Urgency of Transitional Justice for Mozambique

Transitional justice, as outlined in the 2019 African Union Transitional Justice Policy, constitutes a multidimensional process based on the pillars of truth-seeking, accountability, reparations, reconciliation, and guarantees of non-recurrence. It goes beyond punitive measures: it includes listening to victims, institutional reform, preservation of historical memory, and addressing the structural causes of violence. Its purpose is to transform historical trauma into a path of national reconstruction.

Annah Moyo reinforced that truth is the first step in any genuine reconciliation process. Mozambique, she noted, continues to be marked by legacies of violence — from the civil war between FRELIMO and RENAMO, to the insurgency in the north of the country, and the most recent post-election repressions. “You cannot build lasting peace while ignoring the suffering of victims and denying historical accountability,” she stressed. For Annah, it is crucial that truth be constructed through multiple voices — victims, perpetrators, communities, and witnesses — and that it be understood as a continuous process of listening and recognition.

The opening of the debate was led by Alice Mogwe, who emphasized that “transitional justice is an essential path to promoting justice, reconciliation, and institutional reform,” especially in contexts where impunity is systemic. She warned that the absence of accountability deepens the vulnerability of communities and perpetuates cycles of violence. Mogwe called for coordinated action from civil society and regional organizations so that the Mozambican State adopts a concrete justice agenda based on human rights.



Prof. Tim Murithi recalled Desmond Tutu's famous warning: "There is no future without justice." He highlighted the importance of transforming the current political moment — marked by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between political parties — into a concrete opportunity to institutionalize transitional justice. "This process cannot be symbolic. It must be a sustained effort of national healing, institutional reconstruction, and social cohesion building," he stated. Murithi emphasized the central role of Mozambican civil society, especially when the State fails to act: "Silence can never be the foundation of peace."



Dr. John Ikubaje, from the African Union, reminded that Mozambique can benefit from the experience of other countries on the continent, such as Ethiopia, The Gambia, Lesotho, and Zimbabwe. In these cases, the AU provided technical and political support for transitional justice processes. He highlighted the key principles of the AU policy: African leadership, national and local ownership, inclusivity, context sensitivity, gender and generational equity, balance across the justice pillars, and victim centrality. "The African Union is ready to support Mozambique, provided the government formally expresses that will," he stated.



Dzikamai Bere presented transitional justice as a "basket of tools" available to societies marked by legacies of violence. He proposed five strategic pillars: (1) community-based national dialogues; (2) systematic documentation of violations; (3) strengthening of local leadership; (4) active youth engagement; and (5) integrated regional approaches. Citing Johan Galtung, he stressed the importance of "a thousand local dialogues" as an antidote to elitism and political exclusion. According to Bere, "truly effective solutions are born from listening to grassroots communities, not from centralized political decisions."



Zenaida Machado, from Human Rights Watch, shared evidence collected since 2015, demonstrating persistent patterns of impunity, institutional violence, censorship, and political persecution. She noted the systematic use of live ammunition against peaceful demonstrators, arbitrary detention of minors without family notification, and prolonged restrictions on internet access. “Repression is not just physical: it is also symbolic and psychological. It silences, intimidates, and normalizes violence as a language of governance,” she stated. Zenalda emphasized that the most affected populations are young people, women, and informal workers who rely on freedom of expression and digital connectivity to survive. “Denying justice and truth is jeopardizing the country’s democratic future,” she concluded.



Final Considerations

The webinar “Truth and Accountability for Post-Election Human Rights Violations in Mozambique” revealed with clarity and urgency the need for a transitional justice process in Mozambique as a vital tool to address the consequences of recent grave human rights violations. The voices present — from African institutions, international organizations, civil society leaders, and human rights experts — shared a common message: there can be no lasting reconciliation or sustainable peace without truth, justice, and accountability.

It became clear that Mozambique is facing not only a political and institutional crisis but also a deep crisis of trust. Historical impunity, coupled with recent repression, threatens to erode the foundations of democracy and prevent the country from moving forward safely. Transitional justice was thus presented not as an option, but as an urgent and inescapable necessity.

The call issued from this gathering is clear: it is time to confront collective trauma, to listen to victims, to rebuild national memory based on truth, and to reform the institutions that failed to protect citizens’ fundamental rights. The absence of effective accountability

mechanisms only legitimizes the repetition of violence. Reversing this trend requires political courage, social mobilization, and international commitment.

Speakers outlined clear pathways: establishing a National Truth, Accountability, and Reconciliation Commission; strengthening civic participation, especially in affected communities; valuing local knowledge and practices; engaging youth as peacebuilders; and mobilizing technical and political support from regional and continental institutions.

This webinar was not an endpoint, but a starting point — a symbolic and strategic milestone for a new phase in Mozambique’s pursuit of justice. The success of this journey will depend on coordination between the State, civil society, and international partners, and on a collective commitment to a future where human rights are upheld, human dignity is restored, and the wounds of the past are finally acknowledged and healed.

May the reflections and recommendations shared in this space serve as a compass for the path ahead. Mozambique deserves — and needs — a process that turns suffering into justice and memory into a path of reconciliation and hope.

Priority Recommendations To the Government of Mozambique:

- Establish a National Truth, Accountability, and Reconciliation Commission with broad representation;
- Independently investigate and hold perpetrators of human rights violations accountable;
- Release all individuals detained for participating in peaceful protests;
- Provide both symbolic and financial reparations to victims;
- Undertake structural reforms in the sectors of security, justice, and electoral administration;
- Request technical support from the African Union and SADC;
- Integrate the principles of transitional justice into future political agreements and negotiations.

To Social Movements:

- Maintain the peaceful nature of demonstrations;
- Protect the right to dissent and to abstain from participating;
- Condemn acts of vandalism, intimidation, and coercion;
- Create safe spaces for listening and dialogue with public institutions.

To the International Community:

- Provide technical and financial support for justice, reparation, and reconciliation processes;
- Condition diplomatic support on compliance with international human rights standards;
- Fund independent investigations and fact-finding missions;
- Support the strengthening of civil society and local mechanisms for listening and citizen participation;
- Demand compliance with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights by companies operating in Mozambique.





MISSÃO:

Inspirar e impulsionar ações para proteger os direitos humanos, fortalecer a democracia e promover a justiça.


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Inspiring and driving actions to protect human rights, strengthen democracy, and promote justice.

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