



VPSHR IN MOZAMBIQUE BULLETIN

VOLUNTARY PRINCIPLES
SECURITY
AND HUMAN RIGHTS

PLATFORM FOR DIALOGUE ON BUSINESS, SECURITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN CABO DELGADO



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Mozambique LNG Project: Security assurances must be anchored in human rights



Mozambique stands at a turning point as it prepares to resume operations of the \$20 billion Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) project in Cabo Delgado, a province scarred by years of violent conflict, mass displacement, and erosion of public trust. The lifting of the force majeure and recent security assurances signal renewed momentum for economic recovery, yet they also raise pressing questions about the nature of security and the shared responsibilities of both government and business.

Past incidents, including alleged human rights abuses linked to militarized protection efforts, highlight the dangers of sidelining community voices and disregarding international norms. As Mozambique re-engages with global investors and strengthens its commitment to the Voluntary Principles Initiative, this moment offers an opportunity to redefine security, not as the exercise of force, but as a commitment to human rights, transparency, and inclusive development.

Resumption of LNG operations in Cabo Delgado amid renewed security assurances.

Since October 2017, the province of Cabo Delgado in northern Mozambique has been the scene of a violent conflict that has affected communities, businesses, and public institutions. The attacks have displaced more than one million people, caused more than 4,000 deaths, and destroyed local infrastructure, weakening public services and severely compromising trust between communities and authorities.

In this fragile context, the Mozambique LNG Project, led by TotalEnergies, was forced in 2021 to invoke the force majeure clause, suspending one of Africa's largest private investments, estimated at \$20 billion. Four years later, TotalEnergies announced the lifting of the force majeure clause, following what it describes as "security assurances" from the Government of Mozambi-

que¹. The decision, confirmed in a letter dated October 24, 2025, coincides with the signing of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) between Mozambique and Rwanda, which guarantees the presence of Rwandan troops in Cabo Delgado during the construction phase² of the project.

While this development may mark a turning point for Mozambique's energy sector, security assurances alone do not ensure stability or legitimacy. Experiences over the past five years reveal that unregulated or opaque security arrangements, whether public or private, can deepen community distrust and further fuel instability. With the resumption of operations, security in Cabo Delgado must be redefined around human rights, accountability, and community inclusion.

Lessons learned from past mistakes

A report published by the news outlet *Politico* and other independent observers documented alleged human rights abuses linked to security operations for the Mozambique LNG project on the Afungi Peninsula³. In particular, a massacre that occurred in 2021 allegedly involved Mozambican government forces, resulting in the deaths of at least 97 civilians. These deaths were linked to security operations intended to protect the project's infrastructure from threats from violent extremists⁴.

Although the government and corporate stakeholders have emphasized the need for robust security to safeguard investments, these

incidents reveal the danger of prioritizing militarized responses over community-centered approaches. The use of force in these contexts often exacerbates local grievances, fuels cycles of violence, and undermines trust between communities and authorities.

If confirmed, these incidents highlight the dangers of prioritizing security through a militarized lens, neglecting the rights and dignity of the affected populations. They also underscore the urgent need for transparent, rights-based security governance, in line with international standards such as the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPSHR).

¹ <https://www.diarioeconomico.co.mz/2025/10/27/oilgas/area-1-acordo-com-o-ruanda-foi-crucial-para-fim-da-forca-maior-no-projecto-mozambique-lng/>

² <https://opais.co.mz/acordo-entre-mocambique-e-ruanda-nao-representa-criacao-de-nova-alianca-militar/>

³ <https://www.politico.com/news/mozambique-massacre>

⁴ <https://www.politico.com/news/mozambique-massacre>

Human Rights at the Heart of Security Assurances

The recent assurances from the Mozambican government and the signing of the SOFA with Rwanda are important milestones, but security cannot be equated with militarization. True stability in Cabo Delgado depends on inclusive, human rights-based approaches that address both immediate security concerns and the root causes of the conflict, such as poverty, marginalization, and lack of community participation in resource management.

To that end, the VPSHR provides an important framework. Developed to guide extractive and energy companies operating in high-risk environments, the VPSHR defines clear principles to ensure that safety mechanisms respect human rights and operate transparently. These principles include:

Respect for human rights in all security operations, both public and private, ensuring that

force is used only when strictly necessary and proportionate.

Training and supervision of security personnel to prevent abuse and strengthen accountability mechanisms.

Ongoing, good-faith engagement with affected communities to foster trust, transparency, and early risk identification.

Clear procedures for reporting, investigating, and remedying human rights violations, ensuring that victims have access to justice.

The implementation of these principles should not be symbolic, but operational, incorporated into contracts, monitoring systems, and partnerships with civil society. Companies like TotalEnergies, operating in a post-conflict and fragile context, have an even greater responsibility to demonstrate due diligence and transparency at all stages of project implementation.

Mozambique's involvement in the Voluntary Principles Initiative

Mozambique's recent admission as an "Engaged Government" member of the Voluntary Principles Initiative (VPI) represents a significant step in strengthening national accountability and corporate governance. This status reflects the Government's commitment to aligning its policies and practices with international human rights standards in the management of public and private security around extractive projects.

However, formal adherence is only the first step. The real challenge lies in transforming this

commitment into concrete actions, ensuring that all companies operating in the country, from the mining to the energy sector, fully adopt the VPSHR principles in their operations.

By integrating VPSHR into security frameworks, Mozambique has the opportunity to set a regional example of how extractive industries can coexist with human rights and sustainable peace. This approach protects communities and strengthens investor confidence, reducing reputational and operational risks.

Towards a sustainable and rights-based recovery

The lifting of force majeure and the potential resumption of operations at the Mozambique LNG Project bring renewed hope for economic revitalization. However, security assurances that overlook human rights considerations remain inherently fragile. A return to normalcy without addressing the grievances and traumas endured by the local communities risks perpetuating cycles of violence, mistrust, and exclusion.

Therefore, as Mozambique enters a new phase of energy development, security must be

understood as a shared public good, grounded in human rights, community participation, and transparency. Ensuring compliance with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) and the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPSHR) across governmental, corporate, and operational levels is essential not only to prevent future abuses but also to lay the groundwork for lasting peace, accountability, and inclusive development in Cabo Delgado.



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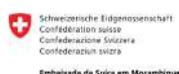
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