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No peace without truth: The case for transitional justice in Mozambique

- The post-electoral period of 2024 exposed a profound human rights crisis in Mozambique, placing at the centre of national debate the urgent need for transitional justice as a foundation for lasting peace.





This position was articulated during an event held on Friday, 17 April 2026, co-organised by the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH), the Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (CDD), and the Mozambican Human Rights Defenders Network (RMDDH), within the framework of the Inclusive National Dialogue. On that occasion, Prof. Adriano Nuvunga, Chairperson of RMDDH, delivered the opening remarks, setting the tone of the meeting by placing transitional justice at the heart of the national debate and emphasising its urgency as a necessary condition to address past violations and prevent the recurrence of political violence in the country.

Mozambique is currently at one of the most delicate moments in its recent political trajectory. The period following the 2024 elections revealed, un-

quivocally, not only deep institutional fragilities but also a serious human rights crisis that, to date, remains without an adequate response.

According to various national and international election observation reports, the 2024 electoral process was marked by significant shortcomings in its organisation and credibility. However, more concerning than the electoral process itself was what followed.

Over a period of approximately three months of protests, more than 500 citizens lost their lives, in circumstances that largely involved the use of force by state agents. To date, these lives remain without justice. Families continue to wait for answers, and survivors remain invisible.

This situation is not merely a matter of security. It is, above all, a crisis of justice.

State failure and the call for justice

The events that followed the elections exposed a profound rupture in the social contract. Those who were entrusted with protecting life, dignity, and human rights were, in many cases, responsible for their violation.

Incidents widely witnessed by Mozambican society—from civilians being run over by military vehicles to the killing of protesters in public spaces—illustrate the gravity of the situation. These

are not isolated occurrences, but rather indicators of a pattern of conduct that urgently demands accountability.

Yet, to date, the institutions of justice have remained largely silent. The absence of investigation, prosecution, and adjudication of those responsible not only denies justice to the victims, but also reinforces impunity and undermines public trust in state institutions.

Transitional justice: A national imperative

In light of this context, Mozambique urgently requires a serious and inclusive process of transitional justice. Transitional justice is not limited to addressing the past; it is a political framework aimed at restoring trust, recognising victims, and preventing the recurrence of violence.

This process is built on four fundamental pillars:

1. TRUTH

First and foremost, Mozambican society must answer a central question: what happened?

This requires identifying the victims, the perpetrators, the survivors, and the root causes that led to the violence. Without truth, there can be no reconciliation.

2. JUSTICE

Justice requires that those responsible be brou-

ght before the courts.

A future cannot be built on impunity. Accountability is an essential condition for restoring the rule of law.

3. REPARATIONS

Victims must be recognised and provided with reparations.

The State has the obligation to identify each victim, acknowledge the harm suffered, and ensure appropriate forms of reparation, both material and symbolic.

4. GUARANTEES OF NON-RECURRENCE

Finally, it is essential to implement institutional reforms that prevent the repetition of such events.

Without structural reforms, the country risks reliving recurring cycles of violence, particularly during electoral periods.

The national dialogue and its limits

The ongoing national dialogue can only produce meaningful results if it is anchored in a genuine process of transitional justice. There can be no truly inclusive dialogue without the recognition of victims, the participation of survivors, and the accountability of those responsible for violations.

Moreover, pushing this process towards periods close to future elections risks undermining its effectiveness. The necessary reforms must be designed and implemented in a timely manner.

Institutional Reform and the Electoral System

One of the most sensitive aspects of this debate lies in the institutional architecture of the electoral system, particularly the roles of the Constitutional Council (CC) and the National Electoral Commission (CNE).

Recent experience has revealed significant challenges in the handling of electoral disputes, highlighting the need for a comprehensive reflection on the establishment of more independent, efficient, and credible mechanisms.

In this context, structural reforms are urgently required, including:

The transformation of the current Constitutional Council into an Electoral Court, endowed with functional independence, institutional autonomy, and clear jurisdiction over electoral disputes;

The redefinition of the role of the National Electro-

ral Commission, strengthening its nature as an independent administrative body responsible solely for the technical organisation of the electoral process;

The restoration of jurisdiction to district courts for the adjudication of first-instance electoral disputes, bringing justice closer to citizens and ensuring more timely resolution of conflicts;

The establishment of an integrated electoral justice system, linking district courts with a national Electoral Court, supported by clear appellate mechanisms and consistent jurisprudence.

These reforms aim to reduce the politicisation of electoral justice, enhance public trust in electoral outcomes, and prevent the recurrence of post-electoral crises. Without such reforms, the country will remain exposed to the risk of repeating similar conflicts.

Conclusion: The future demands courage

Mozambique cannot build its future while ignoring the wounds of its present. Sustainable peace requires truth, justice, reparations, and institutional reform. It requires political courage to acknowledge past failures and a genuine commitment to change.

Above all, it requires the State to return to its

fundamental role: to protect the lives of its citizens, uphold human dignity, and ensure respect for fundamental rights. If the events that followed the 2024 elections are not adequately addressed, there is a real risk of normalising violence and entrenching impunity. In such a scenario, democracy itself cannot endure.



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