



VOZES DO NORTE DE MOÇAMBIQUE



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United Nations points to poverty and unemployment as causes of recruitment of young people to violent extremism in northern Mozambique



The thesis according to which the instrumentalization and recruitment of young people, has as its main factor poverty, unemployment, and marginalization in the northern provinces of Mozambique and, a little throughout the country, has always accompanied the reading and interpretation of the causes of violent extremism in this region. Despite this follow-up, this thesis never found acceptance by the State authorities. Thus, after more than five years of conflict, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) recognizes in a study entitled “Journey to Extremism in Africa: paths to recruitment and disengagement” that the factors mentioned above are the drivers for young people engage in extremist groups in Mozambique and other countries in Africa.

From an early age, it was shown based on studies that violent extremism in Cabo Delgado and throughout the northern region of Mozambique has poverty, youth unemployment, and marginalization as its main drivers. Obviously, the endogenous factors still incorporate weaknesses in the implementation of State authority and the existing ethnic, social, political, and economic tensions in the region.

It is important to note that until 2017 around 77.3% of the total population of Cabo Delgado was under 35 years old, of which 39.5% were of working age. The province had the highest illiteracy rate in Mozambique - 53%, and around 80% of the total employed population practices agriculture, forestry, and fishing¹. In the same period in which the extremist movement was being structured, Cabo Delgado was attracting private investment from multinational companies that exploit rubies, graphite, oil and gas. These investments did not translate into prosperity for the population, much less access to employment or work opportunities for local youth.

This argument has always been met with hostility by government authorities. The softening of motivations for the engagement of young people in extremist groups was based on the idea of instrumentalization carried out by “external” agents who do not want to see Mozambique develop. The youths who attacked State

institutions in Mocímboa da Praia, on October 5, 2017, were characterized as bandits who should surrender to the nearest police stations within a maximum period of seven days, counting from the communication from the Commander-General of the Police of the Republic of Mozambique.

More than five years later, the UNDP published its study on the situation of violent extremism on the African continent, whose main objective is to look at the process of recruiting extremists and the paths for their disengagement.

The study begins by recognizing that an individual’s journey to recruitment into violent extremism is a highly socialized and gendered process that varies significantly for men and women. However, the general context of socio-economic difficulties, deprivation and unemployment that emerges in countries like Mozambique, are important elements that support young people’s decision-making to join violent extremist groups, being above ideological and religious factors.

It is also associated with the quality of State-citizen relations, which is increasingly recognized as an important driver or not of violent extremism. That is, the more the State is distant from its citizens, the more likely they are to be recruited into violent extremism; And the better and positive the relationship is, the more resilient young people are and the less likely they are to be instrumentalized in joining subversive groups. Likewise, the component of national self-identification is added as “an important source of demarcation, revealing perceptions of identities inside and outside the group, feelings of inclusion and exclusion and notions of legitimacy, with the potential to promote unity or fragmentation. Political exclusion and fragmentation are considered key factors driving violent extremism”.

The research also highlights the disengagement process that would be “behavioral change, such as withdrawing from or leaving a violent extremist organization or changing your role within it, but not necessarily requiring a change in cognitive values or core beliefs.” In this context, the process of disengagement of young people would necessarily depend on offers of

¹ National Statistics Institute (INE). **IV General Population and Housing Census 2017: Definitive Results**. Mozambique, 2017.

amnesty on the part of the Government; implementation of demobilization programs and financial incentives for young people; reinvigorate prevention efforts to prevent violence from returning, including by recognizing the legitimate grievances and structural, political, and

economic dynamics and risk factors that may have contributed to early violent extremism; development of strategies that provide economic incentives and alternatives for recruits, involving wider communities to avoid being seen as a reward for recruits.



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