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Attacks on journalists reveal trend towards closing off civic space in Mozambique

- The successive attacks on journalists reveal a trend towards closing off civic space in Mozambique. This situation becomes even more serious when the State itself, through its agents, acts as an enemy of journalists and limits the freedoms of the press and expression.



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In 2021, the Government has demonstrated its aversion to press freedoms through actions that can be considered antidemocratic, says the Report on the Status of Press Freedom - 2021, published by MISA Mozambique.

After the declaration of the unconstitutionality of Decree 40/2018, of 23 July, which set fees and fines when licensing media outlets and accrediting journalists in Mozambique, the government resorted to other limitations that had an impact on press freedom, the re-

port adds.

However, under Article 48(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique, all citizens have the right to freedom of the press and the right to information.

In addition to legislative limitations to press freedom, the MISA Mozambique Report points out that in 2021, registered 15 cases of physical aggression, one assault against a Newspaper, one case of censorship and another of detention.

For MISA Mozambique, an important element is related to the conflict in Cabo Delgado, whose impact on media activity and the environment of press freedom has irreparable contours. "The descriptions and analysis of the cases of violations of press freedoms registered in Cabo Delgado show how these violations were strategically committed to embody a climate of fear to ensure a low level of information flow and, consequently, the lack of transparency about the management of the conflict," points out the MISA Mozambique Report.

In Cabo Delgado province, the situation of

human rights and journalists as entities that promote human rights and civic space is threatening. Poorly understood and rapidly evolving violent extremism has led to deteriorating security conditions and fostered an environment of human rights violations and abuses.

National security responses have not been able to contain the conflict and, in several cases, have exacerbated the causes that led to violent extremism. Among the more than 3,000 people killed and over 800,000 displaced, there are hundreds of anonymous human rights defenders who have fallen in defense of their fellow citizens' right to life and human dignity.

The CIVICUS Monitor, a global research collaboration that assesses and tracks fundamental freedoms in 196 countries, finds that civic space in Mozambique has moved from "obstructed" to "repressive", the second worst rating a state can have. This rating shows that fundamental freedoms, such as the freedoms of expression, assembly and association, are systematically violated in the country.



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