



EXECUTIONS OF PRISONER IN MAPUTO

WE DEMAND AN INDEPENDENT COMMISSION TO INVESTIGATE THE MASSACRE AND HOLD THE PERPETRATORS ACCOUNTABLE

The mass escape of 1,534 prisoners on December 25 from two penitentiaries located in the city of Matola, Maputo Province, led to a condemnable and unacceptable massacre in a democratic state governed by the rule of law. According to the National Penitentiary Service (SERNAP), 37 people were killed, but the real number of victims could be higher, given the scale of the summary executions carried out by the Defense and Security Forces (FDS).

Authorities claim that the killing of dozens of prisoners occurred during clashes between the escaped inmates and guards at the Maputo Penitentiary and the Maximum Security Prison, commonly known as BO. They also state that further deaths happened during the FDS-led pursuit of the escapees.

“We need to understand that the process of pursuing escapees is not peaceful. Among them are kidnappers and terrorists. Various defense and security forces are involved in this pursuit. Some left weapons at home but are still dangerous. This pursuit involves confrontations at some point,” said Ramos Zambuca, Director of Penitentiary Operations at SERNAP, as quoted by O País newspaper.

This justification is irresponsible, as several videos circulating on social media show prisoners being shot dead after being recaptured and subjected to cruel and inhumane treatment. The videos, recorded by the FDS agents themselves, show interactions with recaptured prisoners in various locations. In-

side the prison, the FDS filmed dozens of prisoners executed, including those who had been seen alive after their recapture.

These videos contradict the official claims that prisoners were killed during confrontations with prison guards and FDS. The footage unequivocally reveals that the executions occurred within the penitentiaries and were premeditated, carried out with extreme cruelty. In some videos, FDS agents are seen identifying dead prisoners and trampling on their bodies, displaying an appalling disregard for human dignity.

The Mozambican state, upon assuming custody of any individual through detention or conviction, becomes responsible for their safety, physical integrity, and dignity. It is, therefore, unacceptable for the FDS to subject prisoners to actions that compromise their human dignity.

CALL FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Given these facts, the undersigned organizations vehemently condemn the barbaric killings of prisoners, emphasizing that Mozambique does not have the death penalty. Article 40(1) of the Constitution clearly states, “Every citizen has the right to life, physical and moral integrity, and shall not be subjected to torture or cruel and inhumane treatment.” The complicit silence of the Public Prosecutor’s Office, responsible for ensuring legality and prosecuting crimes, is wholly unacceptable.

The organizations demand an investigation conducted by an independent commission to determine the causes of the mass escape, given the irreconcilable differences in the explanations provided by the Minister of Justice, Constitutional and Religious Affairs, Helena Kida, the Commander-General of the PRM, Bernardino Rafael, and testimonies from some prisoners interviewed by TV Sucesso.

More importantly, the investigation must establish the circumstances of the prisoners' executions to hold those morally and materially responsible for this carnage accountable.

POLITICAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Finally, the undersigned organizations assert that, given the severity of the events, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of the Interior, the Commander-General of the PRM, and the Director of SERNAP must assume political responsibility and step down. This is the least they can do to honor Mozambique's commitment as a signatory of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We also call on the international community and human rights organizations to break their silence in the face of a massacre of this magnitude.

Maputo, December 28, 2024

