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RMDDH

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Report on the launch of the Study on the Situation and Needs of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists in Mozambique

The Mozambican Network of Human Rights Defenders (RMDDH) and the Southern Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (Southern Defenders), in partnership with African Defenders, held a public event to launch the results of the study on the Situation and Needs of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists in Mozambique on 01 April 2022 in the city of Pemba, Cabo Delgado.



The event took place in the conference room of the Pemba Express Hotel and was attended by representatives of civil society organizations, human rights defenders, journalists, government and cooperation partners. Luís Bitone; the Executive Director of MISA Mozambique, Professor Ernesto Nhanale;

the Executive Director of Southern Defenders, Washington Katema; the Executive Director of the Human Rights Commission of the Bar Association of Mozambique, Ferosa Zacarias; and the representative of the Provincial Directorate of Justice, Constitutional and Religious Affairs, Dr Hermenegildo Muapala.



Dra. Manuela Cruz, ACNUDH



Momade Bacar, OAM

The study was conducted by RMDDH and ascertained, on the one hand, the main features of the Mozambican civic space and security for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists in 2021 and, on the other hand, their needs within the scope of their activities to protect human dignity and prevent the closure of the civic space.

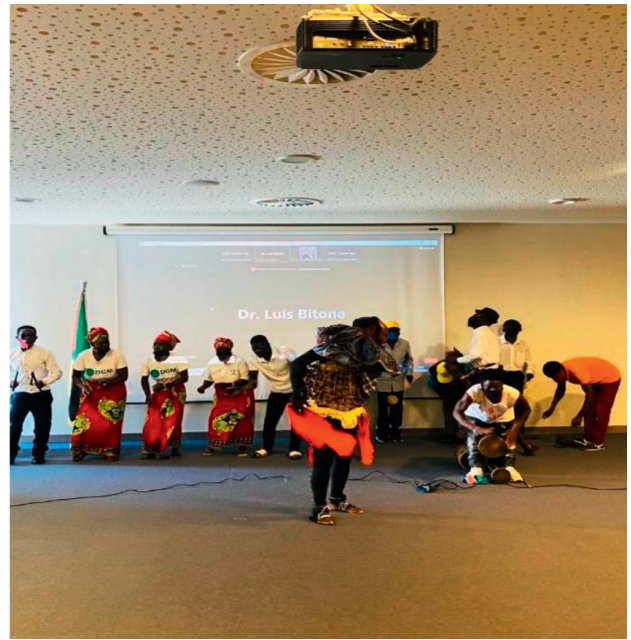
The study findings were published in two reports, namely the “Report on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders in Mozambique for the Year 2021” and the “Defending Civic Space & Protecting Human Rights Defenders in Mozambique”.

The presentation of the study findings was made by the Director of Southern Defenders, Washington Katema, and Human Rights

lawyer, João Nhampossa, and was followed by a debate, in which Human Rights Defenders in Mozambique and Journalists discussed and assessed the situation of the civic space in Mozambique and of Human Rights Defenders in local contexts.

RMDDH is a Mozambican civil society initiative that aims to strengthen the capacity and resilience of Human Rights Defenders, as well as improve protection and security within the scope of their mission to promote and defend Human Rights.

It is part of Southern Defenders, which is the highest level body of civil society organizations in the Southern African region that advocates for the protection of Human Rights and their defenders.



The objective of the event was to create a space for information and debate on the situation and needs of Human Rights Defenders

and Journalists in Mozambique, as entities that promote the opening of the civic space and the defense of Human Rights.







“There are several documented and undocumented examples on a national scale that illustrate or sustain the poor situation and risks faced by Human Rights Defenders in our country”, Dr. Luís Bitone, President of the CNDH.

The President of the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH), Dr. Luís Bitone, mentioned the challenges faced by Human Rights Defenders in the exercise of their activities. “There are several documented and undocumented examples on a national scale that illustrate or sustain the poor situation and risks faced by Human Rights Defenders in our Country,” said Dr. Luís Bitone, in his opening remarks to the event.

“Indeed, several Human Rights Defenders are killed, tortured, subjected to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, arbitrarily detained, prevented from exercising their mission, intimidated and forced to flee their areas of residence in search of safer places”, he added.

The creation of the RMDDH is a unique opportunity to guarantee the rights of Human Rights Defenders in Mozambique and, therefore, the CNDH has always supported, from the early stages, this initiative and participated in almost all the relevant moments of its creation.



Dr. Luís Bitone, President of the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH)

The President of the CNDH took the opportunity to congratulate and encourage all civil society organizations, under the leadership of

the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), in the person of Prof. Adriano Nuvunga, for the realization of this initiative.

The Executive Director of MISA Mozambique, during the event at the launch of the Study on the Situation and Needs of Human Rights Defenders, regretted the attitude of the Defence and Security Forces (FDS) towards Human Rights activists and Journalists. “Unfortunately, we have witnessed since the beginning of the conflict (in Cabo Delgado) in the 2017s, tragic situations in which the FDS found human rights activists and journalists who in their attempt to help clarify the problem and contribute to its solution, to be the guilty parties for the insurgency problem.



“It is necessary to guarantee not only protection mechanisms for Defenders, but also their continuous access to information”, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Dr. Manuela Cruz

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, represented by Dr. Manuela Cruz, congratulated the RMDDH for the initiative and for the space created to understand the situation of Human Rights Defenders and also for promoting the strengthening of the civic space in Cabo Delgado. “In addition to protection mechanisms for Defenders, it is necessary to ensure their continued access to information, engagement in dialogue, their freedom of expression for dissensual and disagreements, and freedom to claim for the realization of human rights for one and all”, said Dr Manuel Cruz.

The Human Rights Defenders are key actors for the communities, as they actively act on extremely important human rights issues, including the right to life, adequate food, water, education, freedom, non-discrimination, environmental rights in the area of the exploration of natural resources, the right to dignified work, the right to land and to adequate housing, among many other human rights, he added.



Dra. Manuela Cruz, ACNUDH

“The Mozambican legal system punishes situations of Human Rights violations, but we live with those of impunity for people who threaten or attack Human Rights Defenders and Journalists”, President of the Provincial Council of OAM Cabo Delgado, Dr. Momade Bacar

During the launching event of the Study on the Situation and Needs of Human Rights Defenders, in Cabo Delgado, the President of the Provincial Council of OAM Cabo Delgado, Dr. Momade Bacar, mentioned the impunity that exists when there are cases of violation of Human Rights Defenders in Mozambique. “The Mozambican legal system punishes situations of human rights violations, but we live with those of impunity for people who threaten or attack human rights defenders and journalists,” said Dr. Momade Bacar.



Momade Bacar, OAM





Author: Sheila Nhancale

