



REDE MOCAMBICANA DOS
DEFENSORES DE DIREITOS HUMANOS

RMDDH

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PRESS IS NOT TO SUPPORT THE MILITARY

Journalists must continue to report human rights violations

- It is one of the most recent statements by the Police of the Republic of Mozambique (PRM). The corporation, which is among the main violators of human rights in Mozambique, wants journalists to help the Defense and Security Forces (FDS) in the fight against violent extremists. But, in the journalistic circle, the appeal is being understood as a message that the PRM and the FDS, in general, will continue to combat journalists who are willing to report critically on events in northern Mozambique, including the violation of human rights by state agents.



It was on November 7 that the PRM, which never hid its discomfort with the critical reports on the war in northern Mozambique, went so far as to accuse newspapers and Internet pages of being used to promote terrorism and create panic within the population.

Fell to the spokesperson for the Cabo Delgado PRM Provincial Command to announce the corporation's latest position. "At some point, there were pages that we realized were more about publicizing terrorist incursions than anything else. So, you [journalists] have this role, you have your investigative side; seek information to help the Defense and Security Forces to eradicate this evil and not the other way around", said Mário Adolfo, quoted by the Zumbo FM portal, edited in Cabo Delgado.

Talking about the press conference, the spokesperson added: "Journalists, normally

in cases of conflict, do not take part in the conflict, they only do what is their job. That's why there's that possibility in case of conflict, that the journalist is there because the journalist doesn't take any sides. But, in this matter, we are talking about a question of humanism, and we are looking at who is suffering from the issue of terrorism, it is not just the SDF. The defenseless population is suffering. Those of you who are journalists have families that are also victims of this phenomenon. So, we must be able to identify with the cause and do work that's linked to the well-being of citizens and not the other way around. I appeal not to disinformation and that whenever they need to circulate information they must have a reliable base, a secure base, and that they should seek bases before bringing out information, especially information linked to terrorism".

Journalists as human rights defenders

In the journalistic class, the appeal to help the SDF is being viewed with justifiable suspicion, given the history of persecution against the press that scrutinizes the evolution of the conflict, including the action of the SDF. Therefore, the pronouncements of the corporation are being understood as a reaffirmation that they will continue to do more. Amade Abubacar, Ibrahim Mbaruco and Arlindo Chissale, just to name some of the victims of the authoritarianism of the State against the free press in the coverage of the conflict in the north of Mozambique.

In fact, in democracies, it is not up to journalists to help the SDF. Gathering relevant information to combat violent extremism is the role of the SDF themselves, which include intelligence and counter-intelligence units. If these units fail, as often happens in Cabo Delgado, where they are caught by surprise, the search for data to inform the FDS's actions should not be left to journalists. Journalism,

in democracies, is, indeed, a counter-power, which supervises the activities of those in power, especially political actors, reporting facts of public interest.

In a situation like that of Cabo Delgado, marked by serious violations of human rights, it is up to journalism, therefore, to be the stronghold of the defense of these rights, with journalists being at the forefront of denouncing these acts. In a context in which the FDS themselves are involved in human rights violations, from beatings to executions, as was the case in the murder, in the summer of 2020, of a naked woman, with 36 shots fired, it is up to journalism not to support the FDS in this saga of illegalities, but to denounce their criminal and disrespectful behavior to human dignity.

And reporting human rights violations committed by FDS agents or reporting defeats to the enemy is not promoting terrorism or creating panic among the population, according

to the PRM spokesman. On the contrary, it is to exercise the role of supervisor and, in this case, defender of human rights. Therefore, the CDD urges the PRM and other branches of the FDS not to view journalism that scrutinizes the course of violent extremism as an enemy, as this is a vital profession for democracy. On

the contrary, the PRM and the FDS must encourage critical journalism, facilitating the work of their professionals, providing information, and, whenever security conditions are safeguarded, allowing access to places of public interest, which, until now, has been repeatedly refused.



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