



REDE MOÇAMBICANA DOS
DEFENSORES DE DIREITOS HUMANOS

RMDDH



Monday, November 18, 2024 | Year VI, NO. 65 | Director: Prof. Adriano Nuvunga | English

Burnout among human rights defenders: A crisis within the crisis in Mozambique

- The Human Rights Crisis Amid Post-Election Protests in Mozambique has not only devastated direct victims of state repression but has also placed human rights defenders in a state of extreme physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion. These individuals, who have been at the forefront of responding to violations, are grappling with insurmountable challenges as they strive to support victims and combat systemic repression.



Overwhelming Workload

Human rights defenders are overburdened with numerous critical and urgent tasks, including:

- **Assisting Victims of Arbitrary Detentions:**

Working tirelessly to secure the release of protesters detained at police stations, often facing hostility. The **Rapid Intervention Unit (UIR)**, notorious for practices of torture and mistreatment, remains one of the most challenging places for intervention.

- **Documenting Violence:**

Conducting detailed documentation of victims of repression by visiting homes in affected areas such as Maputo, Nampula, and Niassa, often amidst threats and insecurity.

- **Providing Logistical and Legal Support:**

Coordinating with lawyers, psychologists, and medical professionals to ensure assistance to victims, frequently without adequate financial or institutional resources.

Vital Partnerships to Mitigate Impact

Despite the adversities, strategic partnerships have been crucial in addressing the crisis:

- **Mozambican Bar Association (OAM):** Lawyers have played a pivotal role in ensuring victims' rights are upheld, intervening in cases of arbitrary detentions and ensuring access to justice.
- **Mozambican Medical Association:**
 - Medical professionals have provided care

for the injured, many of whom are victims of bullets, tear gas, or beatings, under extremely challenging conditions in hospitals.

- **Association of Psychologists and Private Psychologists:** Psychological support has been essential, both for victims and for the defenders themselves, who face escalating levels of emotional exhaustion.

The Psychological Toll of Protecting Human Rights

Human rights defenders in Mozambique are experiencing severe burnout, directly resulting from the immense demands and unique pressures associated with working in a context of violent repression and humanitarian crisis. This strain stems from several critical factors:

- **Continuous Exposure to Violence and Traumatic Stories:** Defenders are constantly in contact with victims of severe violations, including arbitrary detention, torture, and police violence. This frequent exposure to intense human suffering results in cumulative

psychological impacts, including symptoms of **post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)**, anxiety, and depression. Additionally, the act of documenting cases and recounting traumatic events intensifies the emotional burden.

- **Lack of Institutional Support:** The absence of formal support structures means many defenders work without adequate rest, financial resources, or tools necessary to sustainably carry out their functions. The persistent sense of urgency and lack of reprieve contribute to emo-

tional, physical, and mental exhaustion.

- **Personal Risks and Hostile Environment:** By challenging repressive authorities, defenders face **direct threats to their personal safety**, including intimidation, surveillance, and potential retaliation. Furthermore, operating in an environment where the state fosters increasing hostility towards activists significantly raises the risk of targeted violence, exac-

erbating fear and stress.

These factors collectively create an unsustainable burden for human rights defenders, undermining not only the effectiveness of their work but also their long-term mental and physical health. Addressing these challenges is critical to ensuring these professionals can continue playing a vital role in the fight for justice and human rights in Mozambique.

A Call for Solidarity

The burnout crisis among defenders reflects the direct magnitude of human rights violations in Mozambique. For these individuals to continue playing a vital role in protecting lives and advancing justice, it is urgent that:

1. **International organizations** enhance financial and logistical support to alleviate the burden on these defenders.
2. The **Mozambican government** acknowledges and respects the role of human rights defenders, ensuring their safety and unrestricted access to victims.

3. **Civil society and local partners** strengthen support networks, promoting self-care and psychological assistance for these essential workers.

In this critical moment, human rights defenders are the last line of protection for many Mozambican citizens. Their exhaustion is not merely a personal issue—it is a systemic risk to the fight for human rights in the country. Action must be taken to ensure these silent heroes can continue their invaluable work for dignity and justice.







REDE MOÇAMBICANA DOS
DEFENSORES DE DIREITOS HUMANOS

RMDDH

Almejamos um país livre e seguro para os Defensores dos Direitos Humanos, um ambiente favorável ao desenvolvimento das comunidades e ao envolvimento da juventude como potenciais Defensores dos Direitos Humanos.

We aspire to a nation where Human Rights defenders can operate freely and securely, fostering community development and empowering youth to become effective advocates for Human Rights.



EDITORIAL INFORMATION:

Property: RMDDH
President: Prof. Adriano Nuvunga
Editor: André Mulungo
Author: RMDDH
Layout: RMDDH

FINANCING PARTNERS



PROJECTO
Pro-Cívico & Direitos Humanos



**SUOMI
FINLAND**

Rua Dar-Es-Salaam, número 279, Bairro Sommerschild, Maputo -Moçambique **Contacto** +258 857645056
 Email : info@redemoz-defensoresdireitoshumanos.org [@RMDDH_Moz](https://twitter.com/RMDDH_Moz) [rmddh_moz](https://www.instagram.com/rmddh_moz)
 Facebook: [@RMDDHMoz](https://www.facebook.com/RMDDHMoz) redemoz-defensoresdireitoshumanos.org/ **linkedIn:** [rmddh](https://www.linkedin.com/company/rmddh)