



REDE MOÇAMBICANA DOS  
DEFENSORES DE DIREITOS HUMANOS

**RMDDH**



Sunday, December 9, 2024 | Ano VI, n.º 70 | Presidente: Prof. Adriano Nuvunga | Português

## International Day of Women Human Rights Defenders: Celebrating Courage in Times of Adversity



*Family photo from the Regional Dialogue on the Role of Women Human Rights Defenders in Electoral Processes*

On November 29th, the world celebrates the International Day of Women Human Rights Defenders, a date that takes on even greater significance in the current context of political, democratic, and human rights crises in Mozambique. This year, the celebration occurs amidst a period marked by uncertainty surrounding the October 2024 elections and state repression of peaceful protests, which have resulted in at least 75 deaths, hundreds of injuries, and arbitrary detentions.

While the crisis affects everyone, its burden is

especially severe for women human rights defenders. These women face not only the challenges encountered by their male colleagues, such as intimidation, violence, and delegitimization, but also gender-specific threats, including sexual harassment, discrimination, and a disproportionate share of family responsibilities. As a result, women defenders often find themselves on the front lines of a dual struggle: against human rights violations and against the gender stereotypes and barriers that seek to silence them.

## The Critical Role of Women Human Rights Defenders



*Marta Licuco, Coordinator of the RMDDH in Cabo Delgado talks about the challenges facing observers during the electoral period*

Women human rights defenders are the voices that rise above the silence imposed by repression. They provide legal, psychological, and social support to victims of violence, lead efforts to document abuses, and mobilize communities to demand justice. In Mozambique, these women play a vital role in building democracy and promoting

human rights, often at great personal cost.

As Michelle Bachelet, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, stated: *“When women defend human rights, they challenge not only repression but also the gender norms that seek to keep them silent. They are the force behind the most transformative changes in our society.”*

## A Challenging Reality



*Women defenders presenting solutions to meet the challenges of the electoral process*

Mozambique's current context vividly illustrates the challenges faced by women human rights defenders. In a country where state repression has intensified, women fighting for human rights encounter a range of additional threats, including:

Harassment and public defamation, often targeting their personal lives.

Criminalization of their work, labeling them as

"agitators" or "opponents."

Threats to their physical integrity and their families, used as tools of intimidation.

These threats do not deter them. On the contrary, they serve as a reminder of the resilience and strength of women defenders, who often take extraordinary risks to protect the rights of others.

## Recognizing and Celebrating



*Sheila Wilson, Human Rights Journalist*



*Mirna Chitsungo, Human Rights Defender*



*Iveth Mafundza, Human Rights Lawyer*



*Marta Licu, Coordinator of the RMDH in Cabo Delgado*



*Ferosa Zacarias, Human Rights Lawyer*



*Ligia Matimbe, Human Rights Officer at FAMODE*



*Graça Machel -President of FDC*



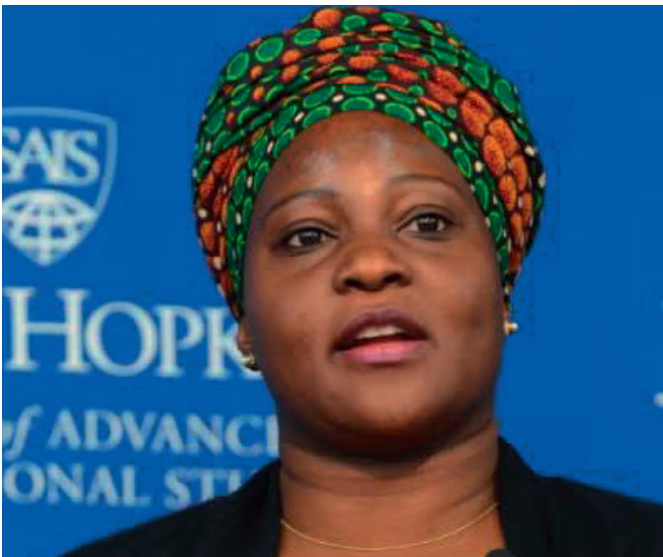
*Alice Mabote – Defensora de Direitos Humanos*



*Paula Monjane Directora Executiva do CESC*



*Benilde Nhalivilo- Executive Director of ROSC*



*Nzira de Deus- Executive Director of Fórum Mulher*



*Quiteria Guiringane – political activist and Executive Secretary of the Women’s Observatory*



*Catarina Artur- Coordinator of the RMDDH in Sofala*



*Énia Lipanga- poetisa Defensora de Direitos Humanos*



*Graça Samo – Defensora de Direitos Humanos*



*Cídia Chissungu – Defensora de Direitos Humanos*



*Judite de Jesus - Presidente da Associação Hixikanwe*



*Fátima Mimbir – Activista política*



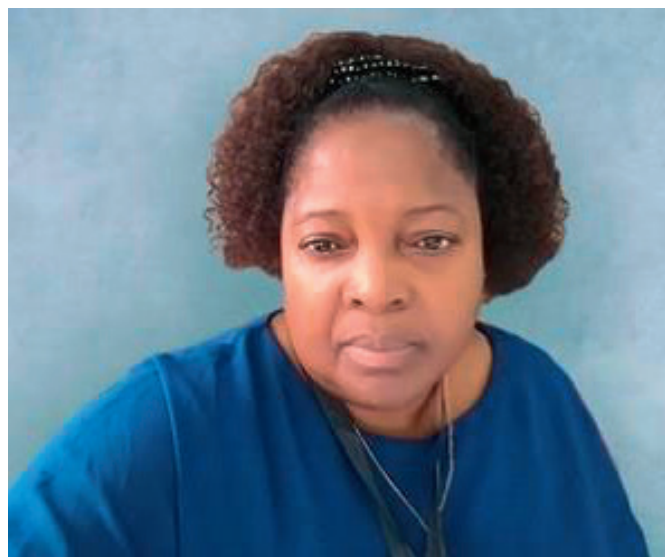
*Isabel Casimiro – académica e Defensora de Direitos Humanos*



*Josina Machel – Defensora de Direitos Humanos*



*Júlia Wachave – Defensora de Direitos Humanos*



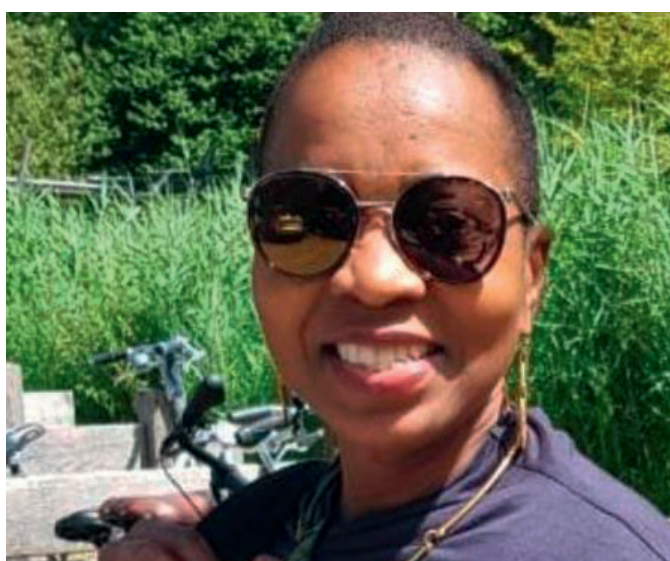
*Rafa Valente Machava – Directora Executiva da Muleide*



*Withney Sabino – Activista social e Directora da Associação Manas*



*Teresinha da Silva – Researcher and social activist*



*Alda Salomão – Defensora de Direitos Humanos*



*Anabela Lemos – Directora Executiva da Justiça Ambiental*



*Fernanda Lobato – Directora Executiva do Txeka*



*Sónia Chone – Activista Social*



*Luísa Nhantumbo – Jornalista e activista social*



*Denise Ivone – Activista Social*



*Valuarda Monjane – activista social*



Today, we celebrate the **courage, resilience,** and **unwavering commitment** of these women. They are an inspiration to all of us, demonstrating that the fight for human rights is not only necessary but also possible, even under the most adverse circumstances. As **Malala Yousafzai** said: *"I raise my voice not so I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard. We cannot all succeed when half of us are held back."*

On this **International Day of Women Human Rights Defenders**, we reaffirm our commitment to **protecting and supporting these extraordinary women**, ensuring that their efforts are not in vain. It is crucial that society and decision-makers recognize their critical role and work to create a safe and enabling environment for them to continue making a difference.

## A Call to Action

This celebration is also a call to action: we must unite as a society to **combat gender inequalities, respect civic space,** and **ensure that women defenders have the support they need** to continue their fight. As **Eleanor Roosevelt**, a pioneer in human rights advocacy, said: *"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."*

Women human rights defenders in Mozambique continue to dream of a more just, democratic, and inclusive country. It is up to all of us to ensure that these dreams become a reality. **Today and every day, we honor and celebrate their courage, strength, and determination.**



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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](mailto:info@redemoz-defensoresdireitoshumanos.org) [@RMDDH\\_Moz](https://twitter.com/RMDDH_Moz) [rmddh\\_moz](https://www.instagram.com/rmddh_moz)  
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