



REDE MOÇAMBICANA DOS
DEFENSORES DE DIREITOS HUMANOS

RMDDH



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Protection of Human Rights and Election Observers as Human Rights Defenders

- Following sessions in Nampula and Cabo Delgado, the Province of Zambezia hosted a training session on Human Rights Protection Mechanisms and the Role of Electoral Observers as Human Rights Defenders during Elections. Held on April 18, 2024, this training was organized in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Southern Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (SouthernDefenders).



Organized by the Mozambique Human Rights Defenders Network (RMDDH), the session brought together around 60 participants from various civil society organizations and was attended by the provincial government. The objective of the event was to train Human Rights Defenders on Human Rights protection mechanisms and election observers as Human Rights Defenders.

During the training, participants delved into topics such as Elections and Civic Engagement, the crucial role of election observers in defending human rights, and both national and international mechanisms for the protection of human rights and election observers as human rights defenders. Additionally, they explored the Defender Line and the RMDDH protection form. These themes enabled participants to deepen their understanding of their roles in electoral processes and gain a clearer insight into national and international human rights mechanisms.

Elections play a crucial role in democracy, providing citizens with the opportunity to influence the course of their nations through voting. However, for this process to be truly representative and inclusive, civic engagement is essential, said Catarina de Melo. She highlighted that engagement goes beyond the

simple act of voting, involving active participation in political debates, civic education, volunteering in campaigns and defending issues important to the community. Catarina explained that understanding civic engagement and its influence on the observation of electoral processes in Mozambique requires an approach that considers the interest groups in each location, the structure of social and political legitimacy of the different actors, the spaces of action materialized by the assigned tasks, the environment and demographic conditions. These elements are fundamental for transparent and legitimate electoral observation.

Speaking about electoral observers as Human Rights Defenders and their role in defending Human Rights, Silvio Silva highlighted that electoral observers occupy a prominent place in safeguarding Human Rights during electoral processes. Their presence is essential to ensure free, fair and transparent elections, fundamental pillars of democracy. By monitoring and reporting irregularities such as voter intimidation, vote manipulation, or restrictions on access to polling places, these observers play a crucial role in preventing human rights violations. Furthermore, the presence of these observers often serves as an effective deterrent against potential abuses by authorities or political groups, ensuring





Catarina de Melo



Silvio Silva



the integrity and legitimacy of electoral processes. Ivete Mafundza, representing the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), comprehensively presented the mechanisms for protecting Human Rights and election observers as Human Rights Defenders. A highlight was the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, whose primary objective is to promote the effective implementation of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, as well as recommending strategies for the protection of these Defenders. Ivete also highlighted the importance of international electoral observation, governed by the Declaration of Principles of International Electoral Observation, which ensures the legitimacy and transparency of democratic elections, establishing fundamental principles and a code of conduct for electoral observers. This commitment is based on international mandates, conventions, and bilateral and multilateral agreements, which guarantee the impartiality and safety of



Ivete Mafundza



Ngandife Karina

observers during the electoral process.

Preventative diplomacy was also highlighted as a crucial component in ensuring the safety of election observers during elections. The logistical and legal support offered by international organizations and governments plays an essential role in creating a safe environment during electoral processes. Mafundza concluded her presentation by highlighting that courts, as well as specific national laws and regulations, play a fundamental role in ensuring the safety and security of election observers throughout the electoral process, ensuring a safe and conducive environment for them to carry out their duties during elections.

In the final panel of the training, Ngandife Karina, representing RMDDH, delivered an in-depth presentation about the organization and its services. She outlined RMDDH's primary areas of activity and provided key insights into its efforts to defend and protect human rights defenders in Mozambique. The organization aims to prevent the shrinking of civic space, enhance the capabilities and resilience of human rights defenders, and improve their defense and protection. RMDDH offers a range of tools, including the Defender's Line, legal assistance, psychosocial and medical support, and temporary relocation, among others. These resources are designed to protect election observers and all hu-

man rights defenders, and they remain accessible even during election periods.

Ngandife Karina clarified that to benefit from the organization's support, applications will be evaluated based on the speed of the application, whether the candidate fits into the beneficiary categories, whether the application fits within the network's mandate, whether the applicant has not yet benefited from similar support requested from other existing protection organizations during the same period. The organization will accept requests on an ongoing basis through its hotline, WhatsApp platform, and email and will make decisions on emergency cases within 48 hours, and non-urgent cases within seven working days.

Training and dissemination of RMDDH protection mechanisms played a crucial role in transforming the atmosphere of fear in the province, significantly strengthening the capabilities of Human Rights Defenders. This has not only contributed to the continued promotion and protection of Human Rights in the country but also strengthened the confidence and resilience of Human Rights Defenders to face current challenges.

Participants expressed their satisfaction with the opportunity to participate in the training, which provided greater interaction with RMDDH, facilitating the exchange of experiences, sharing of concerns and good practices in the field of defending and promoting Human Rights.





At the end of the event, certificates of participation were handed over by the President of the Nucleus of Women's Associations of Zambézia (NAFEZA), Dr. Luísa da Silva.



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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.



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President: Prof. Adriano Nuvunga
Editor: André Mulungo
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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)
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