



REDE MOÇAMBICANA DOS
DEFENSORES DE DIREITOS HUMANOS

RMDDH



Tuesday, July 23, 2024 | Year VI, NO. 57 | President: Prof. Adriano Nuvunga | English

Resilience of Human Rights Defenders During Election Periods: A Retrospective of the Situation of Human Rights Defenders during the Municipal Elections of October 2023

- The Mozambique Human Rights Defenders Network (RMDDH) held an event on June 27, 2024, in Maputo City, to present the preliminary report on the situation of Human Rights Defenders during election periods. The occasion served to retrospect the situation of Human Rights Defenders during the municipal elections of October 2023 and to strengthen the protection and security of Defenders during election processes, promoting the defense of civic space and ensuring that citizens' choices are reflected transparently and orderly at the polls during the upcoming general elections.



The event was attended by 27 participants, including 10 women, social activists, journalists, cooperation partners, representatives of civil society organizations, and the general public.

During the opening remarks, Prof. Adriano Nuvunga, President of RMDDH, stated that without Human Rights Defenders, there is no democracy, and without democracy, there is no enjoyment of constitutional freedoms and guarantees.

Prof. Adriano Nuvunga discussed the challenges faced by Human Rights Defenders during the election period in Mozambique. He highlighted the importance of protecting the fundamental rights of citizens, especially during general elections. The tragic death of Anastácio Matavel, a Human Rights Defender from Gaza province, was mentioned as an example of the risks faced by Defenders in their pursuit of justice and equality. Additionally, Prof. Nuvunga emphasized the principle of equality in the right to vote, stressing that each vote should be recognized in constructing a democratic society.

The importance of safeguarding the right to defend Human Rights was underscored during the report presentation. This right is crucial for the implementation of the conventions and international treaties ratified by the country.

Dr. Ivete Mafundza, while discussing the situation of Human Rights Defenders, highlighted issues from the municipal elections held in October 2023. She pointed out human rights violations related to allegations of fraud during voter registration, vote counting, and the announcement of results. The elections were marred by numerous irregularities, including duplicate voter registrations, unregistered voters, refusal by presiding officers to sign official documents, and obstructions to observers and the press monitoring the vote count. Additionally, there were troubling reports of excessive violence, such as shootings, fatalities, and the use of tear gas against Defenders in areas where voting was repeated. These events also included infringements on the rights to protest and freedom of the press.

The report is structured into two main parts: the first analyzes the legal framework, the right to defend rights, and the context of the municipal elections; the second maps specific cases of violations of the rights of Human Rights Defenders. Notable examples include Gabriel Júnior, Gamito dos Santos, and Coutinho Macanandze, along with journalists and activists whose rights have been com-



Prof. Adriano Nuvunga



Dra. Ivete Mafundza

promised. Ivete Mafundza emphasized that these violations erode public trust in the democratic process and exacerbate social divisions within the country.

Mirna Chitsungo, a Human Rights Defender, highlighted the importance of the report and documenting cases of Human Rights violations, especially against Human Rights Defenders, and congratulated RMDDH for the work. The Defender stated that the report reflected only a part of these violations and emphasized the need to include a gender approach, mentioning women who suffered intimidation and detention during the electoral process. Additionally, Mirna Chitsungo pointed out the relevance of reflecting on these violations as the upcoming general elections approach. On the occasion, Chitsungo cast a critical eye on the recent elections for embarrassing democracy in the country and stressed the need for a support network,

such as psychological assistance, for Human Rights Defenders due to the recurring traumas they face.

André Mulungo highlighted that human rights violations are a common issue, often seen in everyday situations such as shortages of medicines in public hospitals or delays in the delivery of school books. However, he pointed out that these violations become significantly more pronounced during election periods. Mulungo stated, "It appears that electoral bodies are being directed to commit acts that favor the declaration of a particular winner. This is evident from the voter registration process, which prioritizes areas of influence for the ruling party at the expense of opposition areas, continuing through the entire electoral period." He also noted that when fraud occurs, people have the right to protest and voice their outrage. Yet, police responses have often been marked by violence and the arbitrary arrest of journalists and observers acting as Human Rights Defenders. Mulungo described this as a political strategy aimed at ensuring the victory of the Frelimo party, undermining the opposition, and suppressing those who challenge injustices.

In his comments on the preliminary report concerning the situation of Human Rights Defenders, Artur Malate, a lawyer with expertise in this field, broadened the definition of this group. Malate emphasized that Human Rights Defenders extend beyond well-known activists and public figures to include individuals who dedicate their daily lives to advancing Human Rights, even without widespread recognition. Malate concluded by highlighting the critical need for legal training for Human Rights Defenders. He stressed that it is essential for these professionals to be well-versed in their rights and responsibilities and to receive specialized training in electoral observation. He underscored the importance of Defenders understanding not only the protection mechanisms available to them but also the fundamental rights and obligations that apply to their role.

At the conclusion of the event, a discussion emerged where participants expressed both satisfaction with the report presentation and concern about the situation of Defenders, particularly during election periods.



Mirna Chitsungo



André Mulungo



Artur Malate





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



**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)