



REDE MOÇAMBICANA DOS  
DEFENSORES DE DIREITOS HUMANOS

**RMDDH**

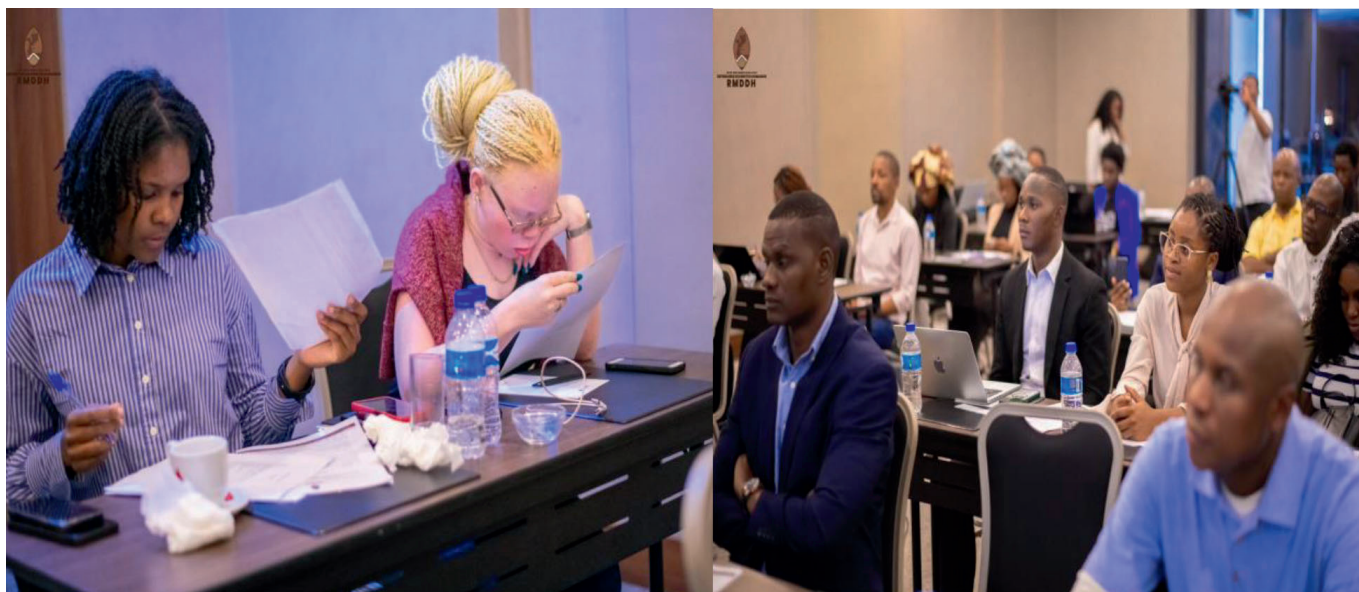


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# Under Threat: The struggles and dangers confronting human rights defenders

- The Workshop on “Protecting Those Who Protect: Risks and Challenges Faced by Human Rights Defenders” took place on Friday, May 31st, in Maputo City.





Prof. Adriano Nuvunga- President of RMDDH

This meeting aimed to promote the resilience of Human Rights Defenders through discussions about the risks and challenges faced by Human Rights Defenders in the context of the closure of civic space and the approach of the 2024 general elections.

The meeting was attended by around 55 participants, including State institutions, Representatives of Civil Society Organizations, Human Rights

Defenders, Journalists and the general public.

This activity is carried out within the scope of the “PRO-CIVIC AND HUMAN RIGHTS” project, financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, through its Embassy in Mozambique and implemented by the consortium composed of IMD, MASC, CESC and CDD.

During the opening notes of the event, Prof.



João Nhampossa- Human Rights Lawyer

Adriano Nuvunga began by highlighting the importance of indignation and solidarity among human rights defenders. He shared his experience of the 2024 elections in South Africa, highlighting the dedication of Independent Electoral Commission staff to ensuring a safe and democratic environment where observers, advocates and journalists can work freely. He criticized the current situation in Mozambique where challenges to the defense of human rights are growing. Prof. Nuvunga pointed out that without Human Rights Defen-

ders, there would be no democracy, human rights or development, stating that the actions of these defenders are seen as a threat by the country's corrupt leaders. He drew attention to the need to improve protection and defense mechanisms to face the increasingly challenging context.

For his part, João Nhampossa criticized the Mozambican political system, which harasses the defense of human rights, creates electoral fraud and promotes corruption. Nhampossa argued that



Mirna Chitsungo – Human Rights Defender



sheila wilson – Human Rights Defender

Human Rights Defenders, when denouncing poor governance and malpractices, were often seen as political opponents. He suggested that Defenders should protect themselves using the law and the principles of justice and the democratic rule of law. The lawyer also noted the increase in hostility against Defenders with the creation of shock groups against Human Rights Defenders, independent civil society organizations and independent press.

Mirna Chitsungo highlighted the significant risks and challenges faced by Human Rights Defenders, who play a crucial role in upholding democracy, peace, justice, and respect for human rights. She noted that these defenders are increasingly subjected to threats, intimidation, and persecution. “When we organize demonstrations, we receive calls from unknown individuals with threatening messages, and we get unwelcome visits to our homes, urging us to cease our activities,” said Chitsungo. As a woman Human Rights Defender, she explained that her challenges are even greater, with her personal life often exposed as a tactic to discourage her work, compounded by the historically marginalized status of women in society.

Describing the challenges and risks of Human Rights Defenders with disabilities, Lígia Matimbe, representing the Forum of Mozambican Associations of People with Disabilities (FAMOD), highlighted that these actors were currently facing major challenges. With the current communication

tariffs, they were limited, with a greater impact on Defenders with hearing deficiency. “We, Defenders with hearing impairment, are no longer able to communicate freely as the internet is expensive and we use video calls to communicate and work”, explained Lígia Matimbe, Defender with hearing impairment. Matimbe mentioned another challenge for Defenders with disabilities, which is the exclusion of these Defenders in debate spaces through poor or non-existent accessibility to these spaces and congratulated the organization for allowing the inclusion of these Defenders. “I see that we have sign language interpretation, which allows me to contribute and learn how to continue defending, even in the current context”, congratulated Lígia Matimbe.

Armando Nhantumbo, from MISA Mozambique (Institute of Social Communication of Southern Africa), expressed concern about the current environment, in which the space for free journalism is being threatened. He mentioned that there were individuals in power who had no interest in maintaining a free and independent press, resorting to strategies to persecute, detain and even murder journalists.

Despite these challenges, Nhantumbo stated that MISA would continue to demand accountability and defend press freedoms. He criticized the country’s political culture, mentioning that, although Mozambique presents itself as a democracy with a Constitution and Institutions created



Lígia Matimbe – FAMOD



Armando Nhantumbo – MISA Moçambique



Brian Hungwe-SoutherDefenders

to appear to be a democratic State, in practice, the space for a free and independent press is increasingly reduced.

Brian Hungwe, in explaining the evacuation and temporary relocation program of the Southern Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (SouthernDefenders), highlighted the importance of various essential security areas for Human Rights Defenders in Southern Africa. Hungwe also highlighted the relevance of international partnerships in ensuring efficient evacuation and relocation, aiming to protect these Defenders. Furthermore, he mentioned that the relocation or evacuation was aimed at Defenders who were at imminent risk, and it was crucial that they undergo a risk assessment to access these services.

At the end of the event, Ngandife Karina, project manager at RMDDH, led a comprehensive presentation about the organization, highlighting the services offered. She explored RMDDH's main areas of activity and presented the organization's protection form. The presentation of this form is especially relevant due to the proximity of the general elections on October 9th, a particularly critical period for Human Rights Defenders.

The form allows Human Rights Defenders to access the protection services offered by RMDDH and allows the organization to have the necessary information for the risk assessment necessary to grant protection.

The protection form can be obtained by contacting the RMDDH secretariat. Once completed, it must be returned to the organization via email.



Ngandife Karina, project manager at RMDDH





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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.*



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