



REDE MOÇAMBICANA DOS
DEFENSORES DE DIREITOS HUMANOS

RMDDH



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RMDDH Mission to Cabo Verde: Protection and Exchange Experience among Human Rights Defenders

- The Mozambican Human Rights Defenders Network (RMDDH), at the invitation of African Defenders and in partnership with the Organization for the Integral Development of the Family (ODIF), carried out a mission to the city of Praia, Republic of Cabo Verde, from 1 to 10 April 2026, within the framework of the “Defenders Rest & Respite” programme, part of the Ubuntu Hub Cities initiative.



The mission aimed to create a space for open dialogue, mutual learning, and exchange of experiences in the protection of human rights defenders, while also providing conditions for rest and recovery for participating defenders. In parallel, it included an exercise of observation, reflection, and applied knowledge production, linking the need for recovery of defenders exposed to high-pressure environments with direct analysis of institutional practices and civic space dynamics in a different African context.

The delegation included André Mulungo, representing the RMDDH Secretariat; Ana Maria Albino and Félix Filipe, journalists; and Danilo Mairoce and Catarina Artur, RMDDH provincial coordinators in Manica and Sofala, respectively. The mission is directly linked to the current civic space environment in Mozambique, which, although formally open, is characterised by constraints in its practical application. The effective exercise of rights faces limitations reflected in restrictions on the right to protest, excessive use of force by state security forces, and recurring arbitrary arrests of activists and journalists. Within this context, the mission provided an opportunity to observe the Cabo Verdean setting, where relations between civil society and public institutions appear more stable, predictable, and continuous.

ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN

During the mission, the delegation participated in institutional engagements, exchange meetings with civil society actors, and visits to historically significant sites, allowing for an integrated approach combining institutional dialogue, civic space observation, and historical reflection on human rights.

VISITS TO HISTORICAL SITES

The delegation visited the former Tarrafal Concentration Camp, a political prison established in 1936 under the Portuguese Estado Novo regime and a symbol of colonial repression. Direct engagement with this site of severe human rights violations enabled a deeper understanding of the historical dimension of repression and reinforced the commitment to memory, justice, and the prevention of similar abuses.

A visit was also conducted to Cidade Velha, a historical site associated with the early colonial occupation and the Atlantic slave trade. This ex-

perience provided an opportunity to reflect on the historical roots of structural inequalities and processes of resistance, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of contemporary human rights challenges.

INSTITUTIONAL ENGAGEMENTS

On the first day, the delegation conducted a courtesy visit to the Praia City Council, establishing initial institutional contacts with the local administration.

On 3 April, the delegation was officially received by the Mayor of Praia, Francisco Carvalho. The meeting focused on strengthening dialogue on human dignity and inclusive local governance.

Key issues discussed included access to basic services, adequate housing, public infrastructure, protection of vulnerable groups, transparency, and good governance. Human rights defenders emphasised the importance of inclusive and effective public policies that respond to the concrete needs of populations, both in Cabo Verde and in the broader African context. The Mayor expressed openness to receiving recommendations and strengthening cooperation with civil society organisations, highlighting the importance of participatory, transparent, and citizen-centred governance.

PARTICIPATION IN THE NATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM

Between 6 and 8 April 2026, the delegation participated at TECHPARK, in Praia, in the National Civil Society Organisations Forum, under the theme “The Strength of Civil Society in Building Development.”

The event was opened by the President of Cabo Verde, José Maria Neves, and included thematic panels, notably on “The Role of CSOs in Strengthening Participatory Democracy” and “Civil Society Participation in the Promotion of Human Rights and the SDGs.”

During the session on participatory democracy, the head of the delegation, André Mulungo, highlighted the importance of a constructive relationship between the state and civil society, encouraging the preservation and consolidation of democratic gains in Cabo Verde. He stressed that citizen participation must be meaningful rather than symbolic, and that civil society contributions should effectively influence decision-making processes.



A comparative reflection was made with the Mozambican context, where civil society participation still faces limitations and often does not translate into tangible influence on public decisions. It was emphasised that democratic consolidation is not possible without effective citizen

participation. In the session on human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Ana Maria Albino and Catarina Artur contributed reflections on the role of civil society organisations in advancing human rights and strengthening inclusive governance.



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MISSION OUTCOMES

The mission yielded results on two complementary levels. On one hand, it ensured the effective recovery of participating defenders, enabling them to continue their work with greater balance and resilience. On the other, it facilitated practical learning through direct observation of a different institutional context, contributing to a more informed understanding of how civic spaces function across diverse realities.

Importantly, these outcomes extend beyond the mission period. The experience gained, relationships established, and reflections produced provide a foundation for continued work within RMDDH, including internal reflection processes, defender training, and strengthened institutional engagement. In this sense, the mission has a forward-looking character, reinforcing the organisation's capacity to act in a more structured, informed, and context-sensitive manner in the protection of human rights defenders.







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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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