



REDE MOCAMBICANA DOS  
DEFENSORES DE DIREITOS HUMANOS  
**RMDDH**

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RMDDH LAUNCHED IN NIASSA

## **The State must face human rights defenders as legitimate partners and actors in the construction of the Democratic Rule of Law**

- After mapping civil society organizations and individuals who are at the forefront of defending human rights and official launches in the provinces of Maputo, Gaza, Tete, Nampula and Zambezia, Cabo Delgado, Manica and Sofala, the Mozambican Human Rights Defenders (RMDDH) launched the initiative publicly in Niassa province, on March 29, 2023.





The event had 36 participants representing various civil society organizations and public institutions in Niassa province. Among the participants, the highlight goes to the Director of the Provincial Justice and Labor Service, Vasco Ncole, representing the Secretary of State in Niassa Province, Lina Portugal, and the Delegate of the Institute of Sponsorship and Assistance Jurídica (IPAJ) in Niassa, Soares Nicachapa.

The objective of the event was to present the RMDDH to human rights defenders in Niassa and the general public, as a civil society initiative that is working to strengthen the capacities and resilience of human rights de-



fenders in Mozambique, as well as to improve their protection and security as part of their mission to defend human dignity, fight injustice and prevent the closure of civic space.

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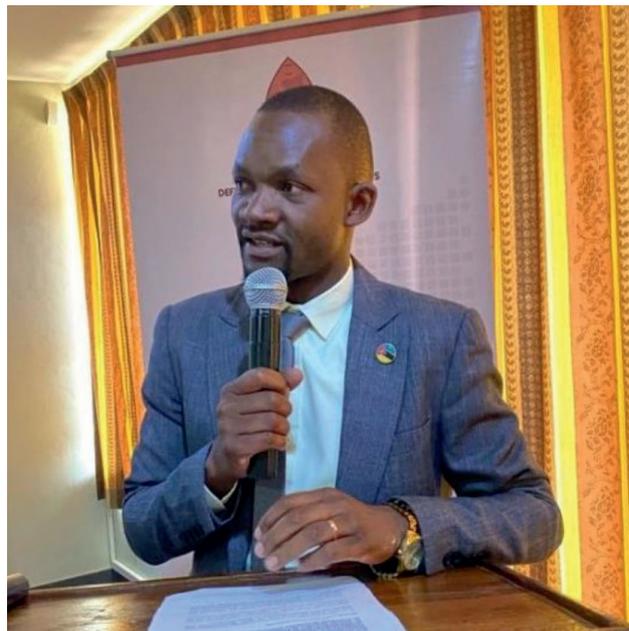
## “The State must see human rights defenders as partners in the defense of human rights”, Vasco Ncole



Vasco Ncole

In the opening notes of the event, the Director of the Provincial Justice and Labor Service, Vasco Ncole, referred to the instruments to which Mozambique is bound for the protection of human rights and stressed the importance of the Mozambican State facing human rights defenders as partners.

“In this partnership, both parties must work honestly and in a coordinated way to achieve



Soares Nicachapa

better results”, said Vasco Ncole

In turn, the Delegate of the Institute of Sponsorship and Assistance (IPAJ) in Niassa, Soares Nicachapa, referred that the State is, in legal terms, the first responsible for the defense and protection of human rights in the country. “Therefore, the State must guarantee the protection of the rights of all citizens, including human rights defenders”.

## Despite the closure of civic space, defenders must continue to fight for human rights

During the event, a presentation was made about human rights defenders in Mozambique for the year 2022. The human rights defender and member of the Secretariat of the RMDDH, Ngandife Karina, noted that the situation of human rights defenders in Mozambique country remains critical, with the Government using the Police to prevent the realization of fundamental rights and free-



doms provided for in the Constitution of the Republic.

Ngandife Karina pointed out as an example the violent repression against the march in tribute to rapper Azagaia that had been called by social activists for March 18 in the main Mozambican cities. The Police claimed to be complying with “superior orders” to prevent the march from taking place, which had been

communicated in advance to the relevant authorities, in particular the municipal authorities.

“Even in the face of this difficult context and the closure of civic space, defenders must continue to fight for human rights. We cannot give up, especially in this election period when political repression tends to increase”, said Ngandife Karina.

## **Defenders in Niassa remind the Government that its work is important for the construction of the Democratic Rule of Law**



As part of the launch of the RMDDH in Niassa, Human Rights defenders and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in that province encouraged the government and its bodies to face the work of defending Human Rights

Human rights defenders in Niassa call on the Government to face the right to freedom of expression, assembly and demonstration, creation and association as preponderant in the construction of the Democratic State of Law. They demand that defenders and civil society organizations are not seen as opponents of the Government, but rather as crucial elements with a fundamental role in the process of democratic development. “Our work is to deepen democracy and the rule of law. Therefore, we encourage the Government not to see us as enemies, but as a partner in this fight”, said Agostinho Chiporo, President

of FONAGNE.

As in other parts of the country, in Niassa, there are also threats and intimidation against human rights defenders. “I was unjustly arrested and attacked by agents of the Police of the Republic of Mozambique (PRM) for denouncing, using social networks, the case of beating to death of a pregnant citizen”, reported a defender. Officially, this defender was allegedly detained because he was not wearing a protective mask against the spread of COVID-19, during the pandemic.

Ana Bela Lucas underlined that the defense of human rights is everyone’s responsibility and the engagement of social activists in this mission should not be a reason for threats and persecution. “We all have a responsibility to defend our human rights without being threatened and persecuted”.

## **The Coordinator of the RMDDH, Sheila Nhancale, made a brief presentation of the principles and the form of protection of the RMDDH.**

Established in 2020, RMDDH provides technical assistance oriented to local organizations focusing on human rights, as well as the holistic protection approach for human rights defenders at risk. Protection involves legal representation, medical support, visits to prisons, as well as internal and external displacements.

RMDDH also provides digital security with a strategic focus on improving the digital rights and digital hygiene of human rights defenders in Mozambique. In addition, and equally important, the RMDDH provides psychosocial support to all human rights defenders, with a focus on vulnerable groups.

RMDDH is a member of the Southern Africa Human Rights Defenders Network ( SouthernDefenders ).





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