Cabo Ligado Weekly: 7-13 June 2021

_Cabo Ligado_ — or ‘connected cape’ — is a Mozambique conflict observatory launched by ACLED, Zitamar News, and Mediafax.

### BY THE NUMBERS

**Cabo Delgado, October 2017-June 2021**

- Total number of organized political violence events: 895
- Total number of reported fatalities from organized political violence: 2,887
- Total number of reported fatalities from civilian targeting: 1,420

All ACLED data are available for download via the [data export tool](https://www.acled.org).

### SITUATION SUMMARY

The conflict in Cabo Delgado was relatively quiet last week. However, new information about earlier events has come to light. The only confirmed conflict incident from last week took place on 12 June near the village of Nova Família, Nangade district, where local hunters found two decapitated bodies in a swamp close to the village. A local official claimed that the bodies must have been insurgents killed by government forces in the area. Government forces, however, are not commonly known to decapitate their victims, suggesting that these people were likely killed by insurgents.

A media report that the Mozambican military is utilizing anti-vehicle landmines, including one that detonated on a road in Muidumbe district on 30 May, was vociferously denied by the country’s defense ministry. Mozambique has a long and terrible history with landmines, which were used extensively during the country’s civil war and which killed and injured many civilians. After a long and costly effort, the country was declared landmine-free in 2015. A defense ministry spokesman cited Mozambique’s commitment to the [Ottawa Treaty](https://www.un.org/ untreaties/documents/treaty/31834.pdf), which bans anti-personnel mines and which Mozambique ratified in 1998, in his denial. Anti-vehicle mines are not covered under the Ottawa Treaty, however, so using them would not technically be a treaty violation. Still though, eradicating landmines in Mozambique has been a major national accomplishment, and the reintroduction of landmines of any kind by the Mozambican government would likely be tremendously unpopular among the Mozambican public. As a tactical matter, anti-vehicle mines are unlikely to help Mozambican forces very much, as government troops are much more reliant on roads for transportation than the insurgents. The government’s denial is therefore plausible, but more reporting is necessary in order to ascertain whether landmines have been deployed to the conflict zone.

Following [accusations](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/05/dyck-advisory-group-dag-mozambique-human-rights-violations/) by Amnesty International that the Dyck Advisory Group (DAG) preferred to evacuate...
white foreigners and even their dogs before helping Black Mozambicans during the 24 March attack on Palma, multiple civilians have come forward with their own stories that complicate the narrative. On the question of whether, as Amnesty initially asserted, DAG evacuated the owner of the Amarula Palma Hotel and her two dogs, it is now clear that Everett Aviation, a private charter company that used the helipad at the Amarula, made that evacuation. Amnesty has now acknowledged as much in an update to its initial post.

On the broader question of whether there was a racial preference in the evacuations, the answer is more complex. It is true, as DAG have maintained from the start, that DAG helicopters evacuated many Black people, largely Mozambicans, in the wake of the attack. Indeed, there is no evidence of DAG pilots themselves expressing any preference about the order in which they picked up civilians once they landed. Among people trying to escape, however, racial and financial interests did enter into the equation. Black staff stranded at the Amarula reported being concerned that they would be left behind if white hotel guests were evacuated first. Within the Amarula, those concerns were largely overcome and most evacuations and escape attempts included Blacks and whites, locals and foreigners. In areas of town where most Black locals lived, however — the areas with no connections to the natural gas projects and no foreign workers — no helicopters, either from DAG or from the Mozambican government, came to rescue them. Those people were largely left to suffer at Quitunda, or to plan dangerous escapes of their own.

One dangerous escape route from Quitunda is the road north to Tanzania, which runs near the village of Quiwiya. New information has emerged about the insurgent attacks on Quiwiya that took place on 28 and 29 May, in which many buildings in the village were burned down. In addition to the destruction, insurgents beheaded five civilians in the town.

Further south, during the week of 2 June, civilians in Machova, near the capital of Macomia district reported five suspicious men to local police. The men attracted suspicion when they asked the way to Pemba — a well-traveled route that locals know well. When pressed, the men said they had escaped from an insurgent base in Mucojo, in eastern Macomia district. Machova residents, believing them to be too well-supplied to be recent escapees, turned them in to police. Their current whereabouts are unknown.

In the west of the conflict zone, local militias and others in Nangade are still having trouble accessing funds due to bank closures in Mueda. Normally, veterans’ pensions would be delivered to Nangade pensioners, but the conflict has prevented that from happening for months. Until recently, pensioners were invited to travel south to Mueda at their own expense to pick up their money themselves. With Mueda banks now closed, the closest bank branches are in Montepuez. Veterans are currently two months behind on their pensions.

Finally, a woman who has spent time in insurgent captivity offered new information about the state of insurgent logistics and recruiting. The woman reported that insurgents have largely solved their supply issues with a combination of farming, fishing, and purchasing supplies through agents in Pemba. She described the insurgency as having an extensive network in Pemba, but that the network was solely focused on coordinating flows of supplies and money rather than planning violence in the city.

She also reported that during a recent attack near Pangane, Macomia district — presumably during extensive insurgent operations in the area in May — the group recruited roughly 350 people through a combination of coerced and voluntary recruitment. Many of the recruits were children, aged 15 and 16. She said that youth disaffection and poverty in eastern Macomia led those recruited voluntarily to join the insurgency.

**INCIDENT FOCUS: ECONOMIC COST OF CONFLICT**

News from the past week has underscored the local economic cost of the Cabo Delgado conflict. Mozambique’s Chamber of Commerce came out with estimates last week placing the losses among local businesses in Cabo Delgado due to the conflict at $250 million since October 2017. The losses reflect a combination of
property destroyed in attacks and lack of payment for goods and services. The Chamber also estimated that 55,801 jobs have been lost in the province as a result of the conflict, including 8,214 since the 24 March attack on Palma. With Total having declared force majeure on their natural gas project near Palma, the main source of foreign funding for many local businesses has gone and is not likely to return for at least a year and a half.

Even for companies unconnected to the gas projects, however, the conflict has been a major challenge. A cashew nut processing facility in Chiure district run by Koshoro Mozambique announced last week that it is laying off half its 800-person staff due to the effect of the conflict on the cashew industry. Nangade district is home to the highest quality cashews in northern Mozambique, but ongoing insecurity has prevented farmers from tending to and transporting their crops. Indeed, two Koshoro trucks were burned in an insurgent attack. As a result, the Koshoro facility has had to drastically reduce the amount of cashews it processes each day to between three and seven tons, down from between 12 and 15 tons. Koshoro is one of the biggest employers in Cabo Delgado, and cutting its workforce in Chiure district is likely to increase economic competition between displaced people and locals in the surrounding area.

Meanwhile, foreign companies that might have been expected to invest in the province are taking a step back. Portuguese energy company Galp said last week that it would not put any money into the ExxonMobil-led Rovuma LNG project in which it has a 10% stake until the Mozambican government creates “the right kind of stability and social cohesion, as well as security, on the ground.” The announcement is a blow to the project’s viability, and it sends a signal to local businesses hoping to partner with foreign firms that those partnerships may not come to fruition for a long time, if at all.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Distribution of food aid in Cabo Delgado continues to be beset by organizational problems and accusations of corruption, to the point where major NGOs are now shifting their approach to aid distribution. The Mozambican Red Cross (CVM) said last week that it would not accept lists of aid recipients from local officials in Pemba, and would instead create its own list of eligible recipients. The CVM provincial delegate in Cabo Delgado questioned the transparency of the lists provided by local authorities, echoing frequent complaints from displaced people throughout the province. Many allege that the lists are used to divert aid meant for displaced people to local patrimonial networks. CVM’s role in food distribution is small compared to major distributors like the World Food Programme — CVM serves food parcels to about 300 families in Pemba. Still, its move could indicate a breaking point in the aid community’s willingness to engage in the government’s aid distribution process.

Another food aid concern is the appearance of aid parcels for sale on the secondary market. An official from the Christian Council of Mozambique alleged on a television program on 8 June that he had seen cases of rice from the World Food Programme in markets in Cabo Delgado, and had been told that the rice was being sold by displaced recipients of the aid. The more likely scenario, perhaps, is that rice distributed within local patrimonial networks finds its way to the secondary market.

There is some positive news on the food aid front, however. Mozambicans who sought refuge from the conflict in Tanzania only to be deported back to Mozambique at the Negomano border post in Mueda district are finally receiving World Food Programme food aid, as of roughly two weeks ago. Many Mozambicans are stuck in Negomano, as they lack the resources to organize travel to Mueda town and points south. Prior to the arrival of aid, one of the only ways displaced people could feed themselves was to go on one of the short shopping trips allowed by Tanzanian authorities to Mtambaswala, a town on the Tanzanian side of the border.

Regarding deportations, Tanzania’s foreign ministry now says that the Mozambican government agreed to the system whereby Mozambicans who crossed the border from Palma district would be transported to Negomano and forced back into Mozambique. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UN-
HCR), which remains highly critical of Tanzania’s treatment of Mozambican refugees, Mozambican authorities say that over 9,600 Mozambican refugees have been deported at Negomano, including over 900 between 7 and 9 June. That numberfar surpasses the estimate attributed to a Tanzanian migration services officer in notes leaked from a May meeting, which put the number of Mozambicans subject to what one participant called “soft refoulement” at 7,552. The notes also suggest that UNHCR is “resigned” to the situation, which, given its repeated criticism of Tanzania in recent weeks, seems not to be the case.

Meanwhile, on the Tanzanian side of the border, concerns about how the government conducts counterterrorism are back in the news following the release of two Zanzibari Muslim clerics who have been held on terrorism charges since 2014. Sheikh Msellem Ali, and Sheikh Farid Hadi Ahmed, leaders of Uamsho, were released 15 June, while another 34 are to be released soon, according to Tanzania’s Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) Sylvester Mwakitalu. Jumuiya ya Uamsho na Mihadhara ya Kiislamu Zanzibar – known universally as Uamsho, meaning awakening – was a Muslim faith-based organisation founded in 1995 that campaigned strongly for Zanzibari autonomy in 2012. It was allegedly associated with acts of political violence in Zanzibar.

The release of the Uamsho leaders reportedly follows a meeting they had with DPP Mwakitalu on 12 June, at which they raised issues about their own cases and the cases of other clerics facing terrorism charges who have yet to come to trial. There is nothing to associate Uamsho and its leaders with terror networks in the region. Nevertheless, their release may signal a change in the government’s approach to addressing political issues facing Muslim communities.

On the international front, Mozambican president Filipe Nyusi spoke with European Council president Charles Michel on 7 June about how the European Union might best support Mozambique’s counterinsurgency effort. According to a statement from Nyusi’s office, Michel said that the Europeans were nearing a decision on a support package. A European technical team visited Mozambique in May to gather information for an assistance proposal.

The Russian ambassador to Mozambique, meanwhile, told Frelimo secretary-general Roque Silva that his country would be willing to cooperate with Mozambique in “various areas” of the counterinsurgency effort. No details of potential assistance were reported. The Russian mercenaries of the Wagner Group, which were in Cabo Delgado in 2019, are not an officially recognized arm of the Russian state, although analysts agree that they would not have deployed to Mozambique without Kremlin approval.

Finally, two major new reports on the Cabo Delgado conflict arrived last week, one from the International Crisis Group (ICG) and the other from Mozambican think tank the Rural Environment Observatory (OMR). The ICG report, “Stemming the Insurrection in Mozambique’s Cabo Delgado,” provides a detailed overview of the trajectory of the conflict, while echoing and amplifying local civil society calls to go beyond a hard security response. The report urges the Mozambican government to invest in relations with local communities and explore options for dialogue, while accepting targeted assistance from the region and beyond to shore up its capacity to deal with immediate and longer-term security and criminal justice challenges.

The OMR report, The Role of Women in the Conflict in Cabo Delgado: Understanding Vicious Cycles of Violence, offers further insights into the involvement of women in the conflict, both as victims and as active agents in the violence, challenging norms that women are passive in the conflict. The research corroborates previous findings about the coercive nature and compounding dynamics of vulnerability that fuel recruitment. The research highlights the role of women in several aspects of the insurgency, as targets of abduction, sexual abuse and forced labour, but also as participants in intelligence gathering, logistical support, and even in some instances in a combat role.
Red Cross Concerned About Aid Distribution

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Improved Insurgent Logistics

A woman who has spent time in insurgent captivity offered new information about the state of insurgent logistics and recruiting last week. The woman reported that insurgents have largely solved their supply issues with a combination of farming, fishing, and purchasing supplies through agents in Pemba. She described the insurgency as having an extensive network in Pemba, but that the network was solely focused on coordinating flows of supplies and money rather than planning violence in the city.