



# CABO LIGADO

23 November 2022

## Cabo Ligado Monthly: October 2022

### *Special Report on Five Years of Conflict in Northern Mozambique*

[Cabo Ligado](#) — or ‘connected cape’ — is a Mozambique conflict observatory launched by ACLED, Zitamar News, and MediaFax.

## Five Years at a Glance

### VITAL STATS

- ACLED recorded 35 organized political violence events in Cabo Delgado province in October 2022, resulting in 73 reported fatalities. From October 2017 to October this year, a total of 1,475 organized political violence events took place in Cabo Delgado with 4,332 reported fatalities.
- In October 2022, reported fatalities were highest in Ancuabe and Nangade districts, where insurgents carried out attacks on civilians and clashed with state forces and communal militias. However, throughout the five-year period since October 2017, reported fatalities have been highest in Mocímboa da Praia, Macomia, and Palma districts.
- Other events took place in Chiure, Macomia, Montepuez, Muidumbe, and Namuno districts in Cabo Delgado in October 2022. Since October 2017, Macomia, Mocímboa da Praia, Nangade, Palma, and Muidumbe districts have had the highest number of organized political violence events.

### VITAL TRENDS

Over the past five years, the conflict in Cabo Delgado province has taken more than 4,000 lives, over 40% of those civilians. By its fifth anniversary, it had touched most of the province’s districts, as well as neighboring Niassa and Nampula provinces, and Mtwara region in Tanzania. Almost one million people have been displaced.

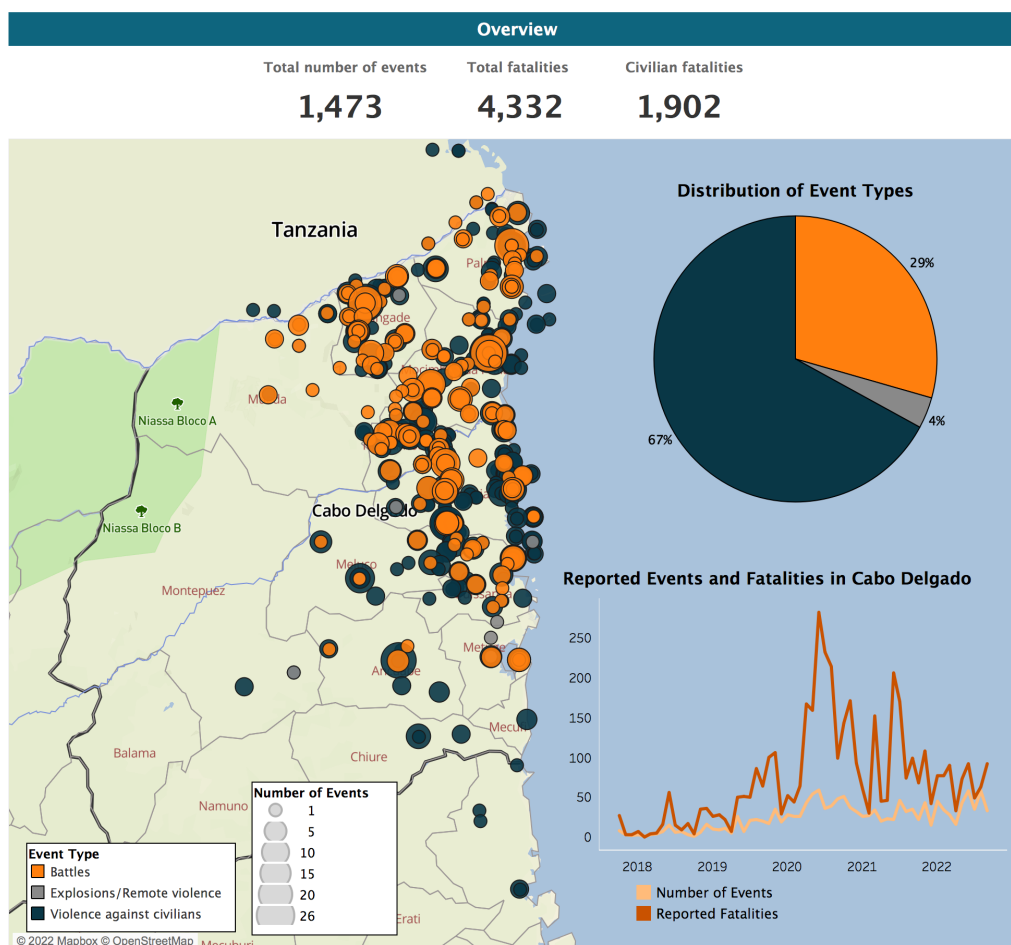
The conflict is international, shaping the insurgency and the response to it. The insurgents, though primarily Mozambican, have always had regional connections to east and central Africa. The assimilation of the insurgents, and their regional network, into Islamic State (IS) structures has sharpened this aspect of the insurgency. There is evidence that this has shaped the public messaging of the insurgency, as well as its internal structures.

The response too has necessarily been international. Mustering and directing international military intervention has been a significant challenge for the Mozambican authorities. Significant advances have been made against the insurgency. Yet those most affected by the conflict, whether bereaved, injured, or displaced, will rely on domestic institutions for accountability, and future reconstruction. Balancing domestic interests against the range of interested parties now involved in the conflict will continue to test Mozambique’s political leaders.

### IN THIS REPORT

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## Five years of Conflict: Organized Political Violence in Cabo Delgado (1 Oct 2017 – 31 Oct 2022)



Explore an interactive version of this dashboard on the [Cabo Ligado website](#).

## FIVE-YEAR SUMMARY

When Cabo Ligado was launched in [May 2020](#), we presented concise reflections on the insurgency's development to that point, and identified some key issues to watch. We noted the increasing competency of the insurgents, the momentum that they had at the time, and their evolving relationship with the wider IS movement. We also noted the poor combat effectiveness of the Defense and Security Forces (FDS) in the face of the still relatively inexperienced insurgent forces. We pointed to FDS abuses, and how this reflected the depth of their dysfunction and highlighted the absence of an overarching counterinsurgency strategy that engaged communities constructively.

The progress made by the insurgents in the two and a half years to May 2020 had been considerable. Though concentrated in five districts in the north of the province, and along the coast, they had also probed as far south as Ancuabe and Metuge by that time. The authorities had by then lost control of much of the north of the province. In March 2020, Quissanga and Mocímboa da Praia district headquarters were [briefly occupied](#). In April, Muidumbe headquarters was [occupied](#), and the following month, it was the turn of [Macomia headquarters](#). This ability would reach its peak in August 2020, when the insurgents, after months of activity, [asserted control](#) over Mocímboa da Praia town, expelling government forces. A similar attack on Palma town in [March 2021](#) would finally precipitate significant international military support. This would change the shape of the conflict over the subsequent 18 months, significantly impacting the dynamics of the conflict, but arguably bringing it no nearer to a conclusion.

By late 2020, the conflict had also unquestionably internationalized on both sides of the conflict. The Mozambican state had in 2019 [contracted](#) with the Wagner Group, and then the Dyck Advisory Group (DAG) in 2020 in its efforts to deal with the growing internal threat. The rapid growth of the insurgency over the first three years placed considerable pressure on Mozambique to accept bilateral and multilateral support. This came from many quarters, including South Africa, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), former colonial power Portugal, the United States, the United Kingdom, and the European Union.

IS had, since June 2019, included Mozambique in its self-styled Central Africa Province through its Central Media Bureau announcements. As we discuss below, this essentially recognized existing links with elements in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and likely Burundi and Tanzania, that were further along in affiliation with IS. In May 2020, we pointed to the possibility of splits within the insurgency, pointing to the examples from West Africa, as well as Somalia and DRC, where IS affiliation was followed by factionalism and splits. In northern Mozambique, this has not been the case, and despite limited insights into the movement's organizational frame, a flat, collegial leadership structure has remained united and strategically focused over the past five years.

The conflict grew exponentially over this period, with fatalities rising year upon year. The number of total reported fatalities was 204 in 2018, the conflict's first full year. In 2019, this more than tripled to 619. In 2020, there were 1,720 reported fatalities.

Within the data on fatalities, it is striking that the proportion of reported civilian deaths falls dramatically over the first three years, from 87% in 2018 to 47% in 2020. Though still alarmingly high, the rate of fatalities caused by the insurgents in the first three years increasingly approaches, if not matching, the rate of state forces' fatalities. This likely reflects slowness in mobilization and possibly the emergence of communal militias in the conflict's first three years.

These grim data were also reflected in the growth in the number of insurgents. It was estimated by security sector sources that their number grew from just over 150 in 2017 to almost 3,000 by the end of 2020 when they first threatened the liquefied natural gas (LNG) plant itself at Palma. These numbers sustained significant military operations, supply chains with regional reach, and base support operations.

By the second half of 2020, it was clear that Mozambique was losing control of the province, with sustained insurgent activity now in the districts of Nangade, Palma, Macomia, Quissanga, Ibo, and Muidumbe, and isolated actions in Ancuabe, Pemba, and Metuge in the south, and Mueda to the west. The security forces were facing serious [allegations](#) of human rights abuses, and in October even experienced a [mutiny of sorts](#) amongst the police's Rapid Intervention Unit (UIR). Within the FDS there was friction between the Mozambican Police Force (PRM) and the Defense Armed Forces of Mozambique (FADM). This would lead to control of the Northern Operational Theater being wrested from the police and transferred to FADM, first under Major General Eugenio Mussa in [January 2021](#), and two months later to his successor as Chief of Staff, [Admiral Joaquim Mangrasso](#).

The successful insurgent assault on Palma in March 2021, following an earlier New Year's Eve [attack](#) on the LNG site next to the town itself, significantly shifted international interest in the conflict. By July 2021, troops from nine countries were deployed in the province. The SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) [was deployed in August](#) and was dominated by deployments from South Africa, Tanzania, Botswana, and Lesotho. They arrived weeks after an [initial deployment](#) of 1,000 troops and police personnel from Rwanda under a separate bilateral agreement between Maputo and Kigali.

These deployments came at the end of at least one year of diplomatic pressure on Mozambique to accept military support, especially from SADC. Mozambique's resistance to multilateral intervention, and perhaps under pressure to secure the LNG plant, resulted in this curious two pronged arrangement. The relationship between the two forces went on to significantly shape the project.

Reported fatalities began to fall with intervention, but a worrying pattern emerged with civilian casualties. The year 2021 saw reported deaths fall by over one-third to 1,100, with more than a quarter of them being civilians. For 2022, the rate of

reported fatalities has continued to fall – 644 to the end of October – but about half of these are civilians.

While primarily the responsibility of the insurgents, deployment and operational coordination may also be to blame for this. Rwandan deployments have for the most part secured Palma and Mocímboa da Praia districts, and allowed for the sacking of well-established bases that the insurgents had maintained along the Messalo river and in Mocímboa da Praia. This has brought hard times to the insurgents. The defections, escapes, and releases witnessed in January and March 2021 were testimony to how intervention forces disrupted supply chains and forced a dismantling of physical and administrative structures. By October 2021, security sources estimated that they had as few as 300 insurgents in the field, compared to 2,500-3,000 prior to July 2021.

This success has not been driven home. The insurgents' response of breaking up into smaller dispersed groups away from the stronger intervention forces has been facilitated by the lack of backstopping operations when strongholds in places such as Mbau and Catupa forest were cleared. In the north, regrouping has taken place in weakly policed areas such as southern Muidumbe district or the marshy, forested land of Nangade. In the south, insurgents opened a new theater covering Ancuabe and Chiure districts, and reaching into Nampula province. Operations now extend to Namuno and Balama districts. Civilians are once again the primary victims as insurgents plunder to survive.

## FROM AHLU SUNNA WAL JAMAA TO ISLAMIC STATE MOZAMBIQUE

*By Peter Bofin, Cabo Ligado*

While the insurgency has faced considerable challenges since its peak in 2020 and the first half of 2021, it has remained robust and capable. Evidence suggests that it has been consistent in its ideology and objectives. Despite operating with a devolved leadership and cell structure, its leadership has remained focused and coherent in the face of the significant resources deployed against it. The association with IS has given the group a clearer identity, even if the practical implications of that sometimes fluctuating relationship remain unclear.

Though rooted in Cabo Delgado, the insurgency has always been transnational in nature. Its antecedent religious sect, with schools and mosques in Mocímboa da Praia and elsewhere, was part of networks of religious men and armed groups of similar Islamist ideology across East Africa. Some of its original teachers came from Tanzania and the Great Lakes. A similar armed group in Tanzania, promoting a similar socially divisive interpretation of Islam was [violently broken up](#) by Tanzanian security forces in mid-2017. Its leaders escaped via likely well-trodden routes south to Cabo Delgado, and northwest to DRC, via Burundi.

As in Tanzania, the insurgents in Cabo Delgado did not project a clear identity to outsiders. The group initially took on the name Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jamaa (ASWJ) to demonstrate their spiritual authenticity, but Al Shabab came to be used more frequently. Whether the latter was a descriptor used by the community and adopted by the insurgents has always been unclear. On the East African coast, 'Shabab,' meaning 'youth,' was in the recent past as likely to turn up in a [pop song](#), as in official [recruitment propaganda](#). ASWJ is rarely used now, with the possible exception of SAMIM.

The incorporation of the insurgency into IS Central Africa Province in June 2019, through an IS Central Media Bureau attack claim, was thus a fair reflection of existing transnational networks. Elements of the Allied Democratic Forces in DRC had a significant relationship with IS. Yet there is no evidence that the insurgency's rate of growth at that time was due to external manpower or support. It is thought to have had up to 1,500 people in its ranks by mid-2019, mostly from Cabo Delgado, according to security sources.

Ideology was crucial in seeding the insurgency. The resilience that the insurgency has shown in surviving the considerable disruption brought about by international military intervention has likely depended on the first instance on internal organization as much as any external support. What we know of this is sketchy and reliant to a great extent on the testimony of former insurgents, and released or escaped captives. Partial evidence we have for this resilience points to at

least three factors: the purposive use of violent Islamist ideology in internal matters, a leadership comfortable operating in networks, and a capacity to adapt a range of military approaches.

Captives who have escaped or been released, and fighters who have defected, have consistently referred to [the importance of ideology](#) in inducting recruits and captives. An active program to reinforce ideological orientation was confirmed by materials recovered from insurgent camps by security forces. By promoting the rejection of the authority of the secular state, education, and traditional hierarchies, it is hoped that loyalty to the new group will be induced, whether through fear or otherwise. There has also been evidence of departmental structures for the administration of day-to-day affairs, such as [health services](#), that illustrates the discipline needed to manage any large organization. Such structures are a requirement of IS from its provinces, are functional and not just aspirational, and informed IS's decision to announce its Mozambique Province in May 2022.

While the United States in March 2021 declared [Abu Yasir Hassan](#) to be the leader of IS Mozambique, its leadership has long been understood to be collective. Figures we know of, such as Bonomade Machude Omar, [Abu Dardai Jongo](#), [Andre Idrissa](#), and [Ansumane Vipodozi](#) have typically worked as small traders or businessmen, often operating regionally. They are, thereby, likely more comfortable working in trust-based collaborative networks than in hierarchical organizations.

The ability to operate effectively in mutually supportive networks was critical to the group's survival in 2021 and beyond. Operations by intervention forces, particularly Rwanda, successfully drove insurgents out of Palma and Mocímboa da Praia districts, as well as some of the well-established bases in Nangade and Macomia. The drop in organized political violence events involving the insurgents in Palma was precipitous, from 58 in the first half of 2021 to just nine in the second half, and six in the first six months of 2022. Mocímboa da Praia saw an intensification of activity. Organized political violence events involving the insurgents rose to 44 in the second half of 2021, falling to just seven in the subsequent six months. This reflected the retaking of the district headquarters by Rwandan forces and FDS in [August 2021](#) after one year of occupation by the insurgents, and the taking of their main camps, Siri 1 and Siri 2, in the south of the district in [September 2021](#).

These operations dealt the insurgency a hard blow, leading to a significant decline in their numbers, resulting in a significant fall in reported fatalities, and the proportion of civilians amongst fatalities. Yet they did not go away. Smaller mobile groups of fighters made their way to Nangade district in the west, where insurgent activity more than doubled to 70 incidents in the first half of 2022, compared to the preceding six months. They also made their way south, opening a new front in the province's southern districts, as well as in Nampula province, in mid-2022.

There is no evidence of any serious disruption of the leadership group. Cabo Ligado understands that at least two of the pre-intervention leaders are still active – Bonomade Machude Omar in Macomia district, and Abu Dardai Jongo in the south. Other leaders have remained active in Nangade. Consistent reporting by IS of incidents from across the insurgents' areas of operation in the province indicates that communications channels between cells, and amongst the leadership group, and with IS contacts outside Mozambique remain intact.

It is often assumed that an active communications channel with IS for media operations is accompanied by other support, whether technical or financial. While there have been consistent [reports](#) from escapees of foreigners from outside the region being involved, little is known about how the relationship with IS, or other supportive networks, operates in practice. It is likely that support networks in the region that predated the IS relationship remain important for the transfer of skills, movement of fighters, and finance.

It is remarkable that a group made up of dispersed elements has survived intact in the face of considerable pressure. Messaging has been limited and largely localized; however, it has remained consistently anti-state and Islamist since the pre-insurgency mobilization in madrasas, to the first shaky video messages in [March](#) and [May](#) 2020, and handwritten messages distributed in [October](#) and [November](#) 2022.

Whether or not this reflects a thought-out political platform, or is a cynical mechanism to assert influence in the political

economy of the province, remains to be seen. Either way, the insurgents will in the short and medium term remain one of the most significant political actors in northern Mozambique, shaping mining operations in the south, decision-making on natural gas in the north, but most importantly the livelihoods, and lives, of the people of Cabo Delgado.

## FIVE YEARS OF STATE ACTORS IN CABO DELGADO

*By Peter Bofin, Ana Marco, and Elham Kazemi, Cabo Ligado*

ACLEd's records for Cabo Delgado in the past five years are of course dominated by incidents involving the insurgents, classified as 'Islamist Militia.' Their actions are readily identified, and the unity they have maintained means that attribution is rarely problematic. Tracking the forces ranged against them is more complicated. Over the five years, there have been private military contractors from Russia and South Africa and intervention forces from Rwanda and SADC. There have also been unconfirmed reports of bilateral support and training from other countries, including Uganda and Zimbabwe. Each of these, for a variety of operational, and in some cases political, reasons have related in a variety of ways with their Mozambican hosts, and engaged in different ways with the insurgents. Within Mozambique over the past five years, there have been notable differences between the PRM and the FADM, as well as the Local Forces, often involving local Frelimo war veterans, as communities have sought to defend themselves.

Private military contractors were used, briefly and controversially. Wagner Group, associated with the Russian government, was deployed in September or October 2019, after President Filipe Nyusi's meeting with President Vladimir Putin in Moscow in [August that year](#). Wagner found the environment difficult; ACLED recorded the reported deaths of 13 of their fighters in October and November 2019, and they withdrew soon after. South Africa's DAG entered a [three-month contract](#) with the Ministry of the Interior to support PRM operations in April 2020. They helped halt the insurgents' drive south towards Pemba, but had limited impact with an exclusive air attack capacity that had a limited geographical scope of operations. The contract was soon [extended](#) until April 2021, which coincided with the insurgents' attack on Palma town. DAG involvement in rescue operations was not enough to get the contract renewed. The company consistently faced [allegations](#) of not discriminating between civilians and combatants, which they denied, and for operating without the approval required under South Africa's Foreign Military Assistance Act.

DAG's departure came in the midst of, and likely because of, a significant shift in how counterinsurgency operations were to be managed. In January 2021, control of the Northern Operational Theater was [transferred](#) from the PRM Commander General Bernardino Rafael to Major General Eugénio Mussa of FADM. The air support contract that DAG had held also moved. From April onwards, the South African firm Paramount trained FADM pilots in helicopter air support, although these assets do not appear to have played a major role in combat operations.

From this point on, private contractors have had only supporting and not frontline roles, while FADM has led counterinsurgency operations. ACLED data suggest that the shift to FADM dominance occurred in 2020 when the number of incidents of organized political violence in which it was involved rose to 143 from just 36 in 2019. For PRM, the corresponding period saw a rise from 28 to just 38.

Over 2020 and 2021, Mozambique came under increasing pressure to accept international military intervention. This may have prompted the balance tipping in favor of FADM. If so, it precipitated a significant political shift in the country. FADM, given the number of former RENAMO fighters in its ranks, had never before been so trusted by Frelimo. Perhaps consequently, military reform has become a priority. In April 2022, Minister for National Defense, Cristóvão Chume, who was promoted from being head of the military, spoke of the need for "[deep and broad](#)" reform of FADM in terms of equipment, but also for reforms that generate better civil-military relations, better discipline, and that instill confidence in the population. Concerns about civil-military relations are real. FADM and PRM have thus far failed to win the confidence of the Cabo Delgado population, something reflected in thinking at [senior levels](#) of FADM itself.

The first significant disruption to the insurgency came with the deployment of Rwandan and SADC forces in [July 2021](#).

The ability of the Rwandan forces to develop good relationships with host communities is well known, further reinforcing the lack of trust those same communities have in Mozambican forces.

Yet understanding the combat role of Rwandan and SADC forces is more challenging. Data gathered by ACLED shed some light on the role of the respective forces. For 2021, ACLED data indicate that Rwandan forces alone were involved in just nine organized political violence incidents. When involved in operations along with Mozambican counterparts, this rises to 47. The corresponding figures for the first 10 months of 2022 were just four incidents involving Rwandan forces alone, and nine jointly with Mozambican forces. The downward trend is a fair reflection of the pattern of their involvement, given the intensity of operations in Palma and Mocímboa da Praia, including the overrunning of insurgent bases at Mbau in the first six months of the deployment of Rwandan forces.

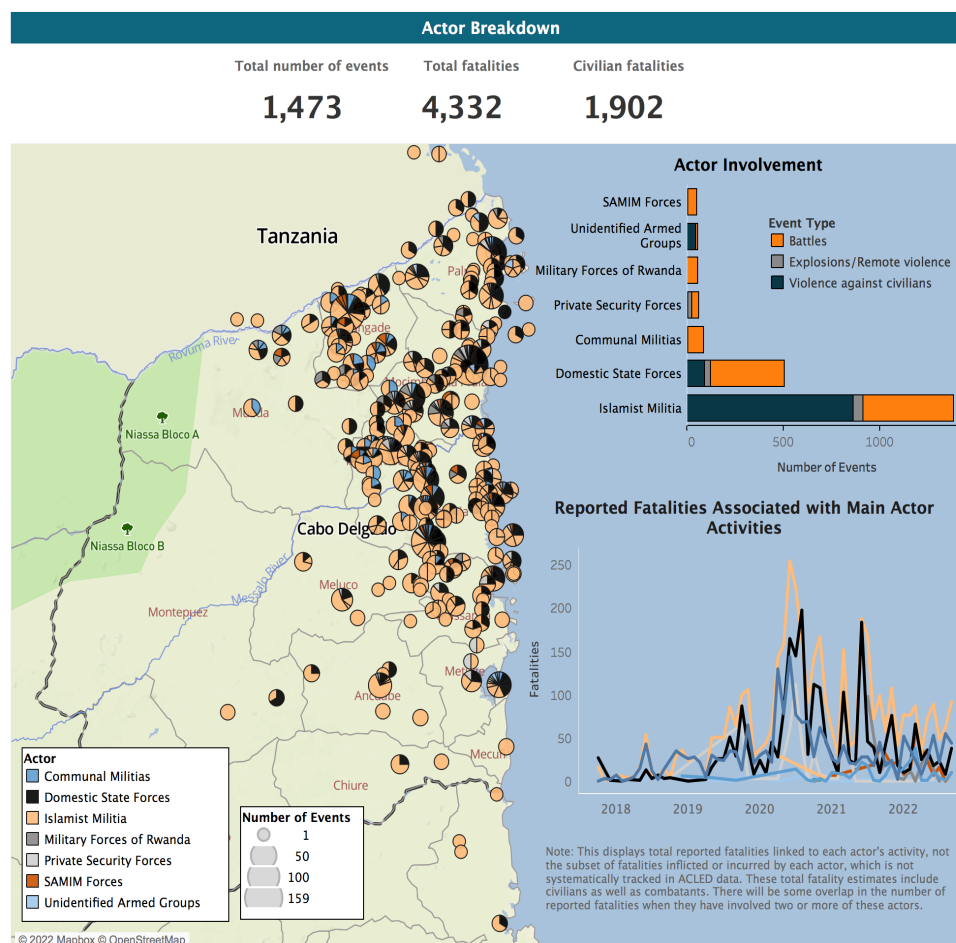
SADC forces have been consistently involved in organized political violence incidents since deployment; 25 in 2021, and 23 in the first 10 months of 2022. Yet over the course of their deployment, ACLED records them as being alongside Rwandan forces just twice. This is not necessarily problematic – there are distinct areas of responsibility between SADC and Rwandan forces. Yet we know that poor coordination between the intervention forces has been an issue. In February 2022, Savana newspaper tracked the progress of insurgents retreating from Rwandan operations in Palma district in November 2021, across Nangade district and into Niassa province, before returning to Nangade in January 2022. The same trek is reflected in ACLED data.

Assessing how active SAMIM forces have been in Nangade district is challenging when relying on ACLED data alone, which draw on sources other than the main military actors who reveal little of their operations. There is much mistrust of SAMIM in Nangade, where it is often accused of not being proactive in pursuing the insurgents. There has been frustration in the district with Tanzania whose preference is not to be interventionist, but rather to ensure the conflict does not spill over the border. Yet this is not necessarily reflected in the data. ACLED data show that SAMIM has been involved in a total of 48 organized political violence events in the province since its deployment. In 2022, SAMIM has been busiest in Nangade, having been involved in 13. This may reflect heightened engagement following the conclusion of recent [security agreements](#) between Mozambique and Tanzania. It may also reflect that Nangade has become an increasingly important center for the insurgents, particularly following their expulsion from bases in Catupa forest earlier in 2022.

At the same time, Tanzanian armed forces are notoriously uncommunicative. For example, the suspected deployment of a further 300 Tanzania People's Defence Force members to Nangade in recent weeks cannot be confirmed at the moment. If true, this deployment likely came not from SADC processes, but as a result of bilateral engagement by Tanzania before, during, and after President Samia Suluhu Hassan's visit to Maputo in September. Rwanda too, though skilled at public relations, has said nothing about the movement of its troops in Nangade recently, which has been reported by local sources. Such a deployment would depend on a complex set of bilateral and multilateral understandings with Tanzania, SADC, and Mozambique.

The diplomatic and political challenge presented by international intervention forces is also seen at the local level where community militias have emerged in the absence of state security. Activity by these militias is concentrated in Nangade and Macomia districts, which have seen 29 and 38 incidents of organized political violence involving such militias over the course of the conflict. Known collectively as Local Forces, and ostensibly falling under PRM command, they form and operate independently at the local level. Though poorly trained and ill-equipped, they represent potential local power centers which the authorities need to continually engage with.

## Five years of Conflict: Organized Political Violence in Cabo Delgado (1 Oct 2017 – 31 Oct 2022)



Explore an interactive version of this dashboard on the [Cabo Ligado website](#).

## ACCOUNTABILITY OR IMPUNITY: BEYOND FIVE YEARS OF CONFLICT

*Zenaida Machado, Human Rights Watch*

Aisha has fled violence twice since her house was reduced to ashes during a massive attack in 2018 on her village in Macomia, northern Mozambique, by an armed group locally called Al Shabab or Mashababos. She sought refuge in another town, where two years later an alleged Al Shabab fighter beheaded her 14-year-old son in front of her, prompting her to flee by boat to the provincial capital, Pemba. Aisha, whose full name I am not using for her protection, knows her son's killer, and she says she will identify him for the authorities if they assure her that justice will be done.

Over the past five years, since Al Shabab fighters linked to the IS began their insurgency in Cabo Delgado, northern Mozambique, civilians have suffered horrendous human rights abuses at the hands of both government forces and Al Shabab fighters. Forces on both sides have been [implicated](#) in war crimes, including killing civilians, sexual violence, and destroying property.

Despite the massive human rights abuses, the intervention of African regional bodies such as the SADC and the African Union (AU) in Mozambique have mostly focused on military operations against the insurgents while largely ignoring redress for victims of abuses. Last year, [SADC](#) and [Rwanda](#) sent thousands of troops to bolster the Mozambican forces.

Recently, the AU Peace and Security Council [called for more military equipment](#) to be speedily shipped to Mozambique. According to ACLED data, over 4,000 people have been killed since the start of northern Mozambique's conflict in October 2017. Almost a million people are [displaced](#), some in camps and informal settlements [with limited access](#) to basic necessities.

Women and children have experienced exceptional harm. [Al Shabab](#) fighters have abducted, enslaved, raped, forced into marriage, and sold to foreigners hundreds of women and girls. The group has also [beheaded young men](#), and [kidnapped](#) and used boys to fight government forces, in violation of the international prohibition on recruiting and using child soldiers. They have also destroyed civilian structures, including houses, [hospitals](#), [schools](#), and [places of worship](#).

Mozambican government forces have also [been implicated in serious human rights abuses](#), including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention, sexual harassment, and ill-treatment of detainees, in violation of international human rights and humanitarian law. Most of the victims were suspected of having links to Al Shabab. But a [mass trial in 2019](#) showed the extent of arbitrary detentions. The judge acquitted 113 of the 189 defendants for lack of evidence. One of them was a woman arrested and detained with her eight-month-old baby for giving water to a suspected insurgent.

Security forces also have prevented people from [fleeing the fighting](#), violating laws-of-war requirements that warring parties [protect](#) civilians and [remove them from the vicinity](#) of military operations.

Not even journalists were spared, with many experiencing [enforced disappearance, intimidation, detention, and prosecution](#) over the years.

The Mozambican government has ignored [rights groups' calls](#) to investigate and appropriately punish security forces implicated in abuses. In 2021, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) [issued a resolution](#) calling on the government to ensure greater protection of civilians. But no one has been held to account for the abuses documented and exposed by Human Rights Watch (HRW) and other groups. The government's legal actions against suspected Al Shabab fighters have also fallen short of victims' expectations, as only a few cases have been tried successfully in court.

President Filipe Nyusi [has been criticized](#) for bypassing state institutions and violating the constitution when he unilaterally [moved to pardon alleged insurgents](#) who responded to authorities' appeals for surrender. He rebuked those criticisms, [claiming](#) that he was only publicly presenting rescued civilians who would be reintegrated into their communities.

[The AU Transitional Justice Policy](#), approved in 2019, stipulates that "pardons, in contrast to amnesties, are conferred after a prosecutorial process has been followed to its conclusion." It further notes that even amnesties "should be formulated with the participation and consent of affected communities, including victim groups, and have regard to the necessity of the right of victims to remedy, particularly in the form of getting the truth and reparations."

Under the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the [Maputo Protocol](#)), the Mozambican government has obligations to prevent gender-based violence, investigate, prosecute, and punish those responsible for abuses, and provide timely, accessible, and effective remedies to victims and survivors. But the government has done little or none of that.

In fact, the government has [revictimized](#) some women and girls, keeping them incommunicado for weeks or longer after rescuing them, without access to their relatives. On at least one occasion, HRW sources witnessed some of these women being paraded in public as suspected informants or aides for the insurgents.

SADC and the AU should not continue to sideline human rights protections in their military operations against Al Shabab. These regional bodies should immediately take concrete steps to support efforts for accountability and justice for the victims of the northern Mozambique conflict. This starts with publicly urging the Mozambican authorities to investigate all allegations of abuses by both state security forces and Al Shabab and prosecute those implicated in fair trials.

Mozambican authorities should ensure that the route to peace and stability in the northern part of the country also includes accountability and reparations for victims. The government, in collaboration with the AU, should also mandate the ACHPR to set up an independent commission of inquiry to investigate the widespread rights violations.

Aisha deserves a real chance to seek justice against the man who killed her son, and so do millions of other Mozambicans who have suffered for so long.



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