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Amnesty International Report 2017/18 - The State of the World's Human Rights - Mozambique

The government's hidden borrowing plunged the country into economic crisis. Food insecurity deepened because of large-scale land acquisition for mining which pushed people off land on which they depended for subsistence. People expressing dissenting or critical views continued to face attacks and intimidation by unidentified individuals or security forces. An estimated 30,000 people with albinism faced discrimination and feared for their lives, and at least 13 were killed. Violence against women and girls remained widespread.

Background

The Administrative Tribunal and the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into the Situation of the Public Debt stated in 2016 that the guarantees on the undisclosed borrowing by the government of USD2.2 billion for use in security and defence spending was illegal and unconstitutional. The undisclosed loans were revealed in April 2016; it was projected that they would drive the public debt to 135% of GDP during 2017. Local currency lost value and prices increased substantially, a situation which was compounded by the country's dependence on imports.

Senior government officials obstructed a forensic audit of the loans which had been demanded by international donors in order to restore trust and to resume aid support. Consequently, donors withheld aid pending the government's co-operation and its full disclosure.

The December 2016 truce reached between the government, led by the Mozambique Liberation Front, and the main opposition party, Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO), continued to hold in 2017, after three years of violent clashes. Peace negotiations continued on decentralization of government powers. The relationship between the two leaders remained tense; RENAMO leader Afonso Dhlakama accused President Nyusi of failing to withdraw government troops from the Gorongosa region by the agreed time.

Land disputes

Mining companies acquired land used by residents, exacerbating already existing food insecurity which affected over 60% of people in rural areas who depended on the land for their livelihoods, and for food and water.

Coal mining company Vale Mozambique began in 2013 to fence off land used by local residents to graze their livestock and collect firewood, including in the Nhanchere area in the Moatize district of Tete province. On 13 June 2017, Hussien António Laitone was shot dead by police in Nhanchere during the community's peaceful protest against land acquisition for mining; he had not participated in the protest.

Freedoms of expression and association

Intimidation and harassment of and attacks against people who expressed dissenting or critical views continued.

Journalist and human rights activist Armando Nenane was severely beaten on 17 May in the capital, Maputo, by riot police. He was attacked for his views on the so-called G40, a group allegedly created under the government of former President Guebuza to discredit opponents in favour of the government. Prior to the beating, Armando Nenane received anonymous death threats by telephone. No one had been held accountable for the attack by the end of the year.

On 4 October, Mahamudo Amurane, Mayor of the northern city of Nampula, was shot dead in front of his house by an unidentified gunman. Following disagreements with the leadership of the Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM), Mahamudo Amurane had announced his intention to leave the party to form his own party and seek re-election in October 2018 municipal elections.

On 2 December, a gunman threatened to kill Aunício da Silva, an investigative journalist and editor of *Ikweli*, a weekly publication, in Nampula. The gunman accused him of publishing articles that tarnished the image of Carlos Saíde, the MDM mayoral candidate for Nampula.

Discrimination – people with albinism

An estimated 30,000 people with albinism experienced discrimination and were ostracized; many lived in fear of their lives. Incidents of persecution increased; at least 13 people with albinism were known to have been killed although figures are likely to have been greater. The killings were fuelled by superstition or myths about the magical powers of people with albinism. Most killings took place in the central and northern provinces, the country's poorest regions.

A seven-year-old boy with albinism was murdered on 31 January by four unidentified men who broke into his house and abducted him while the family slept, in Ngaúma district, Niassa province. On 28 May, a group of unidentified assailants abducted a three-year-old boy from his mother in Angónia district, Tete province. On 13 September, a 17-year-old youth was killed for his body parts and organs in Benga area, Moatize district, in Tete province. The attackers removed his brain, hair, and arm bones. None of those responsible for the killings were arrested or brought to justice by the end of the year.

Despite public outcry, the government did little to address the problem. A strategy was designed to stop the killings; however, this was not implemented, allegedly because of a lack of resources.

Violence against women and girls

There were high rates of women murdered, often by men intimately known, or related, to them. In several cases, the perpetrators attempted to justify their actions by claiming the victim used witchcraft against them.

On 10 January, a 31-year-old man stabbed his 27-year-old wife to death with a kitchen knife in Inhagoia neighbourhood on the outskirts of Maputo. In February, in Vanduzi district, Manica province, a 27-year-old man decapitated his mother with a machete saying she had refused to serve him food. In May, a man killed his mother in Guru district, Manica province, claiming she cast a spell of sexual impotence on him. In August, two brothers killed their 70-year-old grandmother in the Messano locality, Bilene district, Gaza province, after accusing her of casting a bad luck spell on them. In September, in the Centro Hípico neighbourhood located on the outskirts of Chimoio, Manica province, a man killed his 80-year-old mother with an iron bar after accusing her of bewitching him.

Although, in all these cases, the suspected perpetrators admitted that they carried out the killings, the authorities failed to develop, resource and implement an effective strategy to combat violence against women.

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