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The Al-Shabaab armed group killed 17 civilians; armed forces and their allies carried out abuses against civilians. The rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association were repressed. Police used live ammunition against opposition members and supporters during the election period, killing protesters and bystanders; hundreds were arbitrarily detained. A man died in police custody in suspicious circumstances. The police failed to protect people from kidnappings by criminals.

Background

Mozambique began its two-year term at the UN Security Council in January.

The government established the Inter-ministerial Commission for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law but significant human rights abuses, driven by the conflict in Cabo Delgado province, and other structural factors, continued.

Although Mozambique was responsible for only 0.02% of global greenhouse gas emission, it was one of the countries most affected by climate change.

Twelve people died and about 40,000 others were affected by floods in Maputo province in February. In March, five children died and 20 houses were destroyed as a result of heavy rains in the city of Pemba.

Between February and March, more than 1.3 million people were affected by Cyclone Freddy in Inhambane, Sofala, Manica, Tete, Zambezia and Niassa provinces; floods caused the displacement of 250,000 people, killed 453 and injured 630. Around 51% of those affected were women and children. The authorities failed to provide timely humanitarian assistance to the victims.

Municipal elections took place on 11 October in 65 municipalities.

Violations of international humanitarian law

The armed group Al-Shabaab, the Defence and Security Forces (FDS) and the Southern African Development Community's Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) committed war crimes against civilians in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, in the context of ongoing armed conflict.

Between June and September, Al-Shabaab carried out attacks in the Mocímboa da Praia district. They killed a man and burnt 10 houses in Limala, and killed a woman in Kalugo and 13 people in Naquitengue. In July, the group beheaded two Christian men in Litamanda in Macomia district.

On 24 July, an FDS officer raped a 17-year-old girl in Nangade district. Also in July, a SAMIM officer shot and injured a man in Ingoane, Mucojo district. The authorities failed to open investigations into both cases.

Freedom of expression, association and assembly

Security forces repressed protesters. In January, a massive police presence involving the Rapid Intervention Unit and police canine units prevented 130 Namaacha municipality staff members from marching in Maputo province to protest at a five-month delay in salary payments. One protester said they all retreated in fear.

On 8 August, the Police of the Republic of Mozambique (PRM) prevented striking doctors from providing free healthcare services around the Zimpeto neighbourhood in the capital, Maputo. On 21 August, a government spokesperson threatened doctors still under probation with dismissal if they continued striking.

Excessive use of force

On 18 March, the PRM fired live ammunition, rubber bullets and tear gas at hundreds of people in the cities of Maputo and Beira, attending a peaceful gathering to honour the late outspoken rapper, Edson da Luz. A woman, known only as Belarmina, died after being shot, and dozens were injured, including Inocência Manhique who lost an eye; 22 others were arrested in both cities.

In the period up to and following the municipal elections, security forces used live ammunition to prevent protests and gatherings by members and supporters of the opposition party, Renamo. On 12 October, the PRM shot three people, one of whom died, in Chiúre district, Cabo Delgado province. They also fired at supporters in the city of Nampula, wounding a child, and continued the attack between 1am and 4am the following day. Later that day, another person was injured by gunfire used to disperse Renamo supporters in Guruè municipality, Zambezia province.

The announcement, on 26 October, that the ruling party had won the election in the municipalities contested by Renamo was followed by two days of protest by Renamo members and supporters. The PRM again used excessive force to disperse the protests, killing at least four bystanders. In Nampula, Atipo Ajum, aged 14, was shot dead while selling drinks on the street; Sabonete Saíde was killed when he was hit by a bullet in his house. In Nacala municipality, Issa Félix was shot dead when he tried to cross the street, and 17-year-old Braimo Arlindo was killed when he and his father, who was seriously injured, tried to shelter from gunfire. Dozens suffered symptoms of tear gas inhalation. Witnesses said that PRM officers in Maputo were joined by plain-clothes officers and riot police using AK-47s. On 27 October, a police spokesperson said the killings were being investigated but that the police would use all means to prevent violent protest.

In December, at least one person – a 15-year-old boy – was killed in Marromeu district, and five others injured by bullets fired by police in Guruè when the PRM used excessive force to disperse opposition supporters protesting the October election results.

Arbitrary arrests and detentions

Security forces subjected people, including protesters, to arbitrary detention.

Angolan national, Gerson Emanuel Quintas (also known as Man Genas), his wife and two children remained under house arrest in Maputo, having been arrested by the PRM on 26 February after claiming asylum. Gerson Emanuel Quintas had reportedly fled death threats in Angola after apparently exposing a senior police officer for alleged involvement in drug trafficking.

In July, Macassar Bacar was found dead at the 3rd Police Station in Maputo, the day after he was arrested by the National Service for Criminal Investigation. The police said he died from natural causes, but a local NGO suspected that he had died under torture.

In November, the minister of interior said that hundreds of people had been detained and charged in connection with the October protests. Only 17 of them had been released by the end of the year. Most of them remained in detention (see above, Excessive use of force).

Right to life and security of the person

Businesspeople of Asian descent or their families continued to be targeted by kidnappers demanding ransoms for their release. The PRM failed to take adequate measures to ensure their security. During the year, entrepreneurs Sheinaz Gani, Sanjay Dhalani and Firoz Mussa Judge were released from months of captivity after being kidnapped in Maputo between March and September. Firoz Mussa Judge was freed after his family paid a ransom to his captors.