

World Report 2024



Mozambique

Events of 2023

Mozambique police forces are stationed outside the Technical Secretariat of Electoral Administration building as supporters of the Mozambican opposition party Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) demonstrate in Maputo on October 17, 2023.

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The security situation in northern Mozambique improved significantly, with many displaced people returning to their areas of origin in the districts most affected by the armed conflict between an armed group linked to Islamic State (ISIS), known locally as Al-Shabab or “Mashababos,” and joint Mozambican, Rwandan, and Southern African forces. Authorities announced the killing of the alleged Al-Shabab leader Bonomade Machude Omar, but the group continued to operate in Macomia and Mocimboa da Praia districts.

Members of the Southern African Development Community Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) were implicated in the mutilation and other mistreatment of the dead in Cabo Delgado. State security forces continued to use lethal force and arbitrary arrest and detention to limit people’s right to peaceful protest across the country. Parliament ordered the government to review a draft law that would permit excessive government interference in nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), including the authority to shut down an organization. Mozambique began a two-year mandate as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council.

Violence in Northern Mozambique

The [security](#) situation in northern Mozambique [improved significantly](#) during the year, with many people returning to Palma and Mocimboa da Praia districts, which had been most affected by the armed conflict. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that 420,000 internally displaced people [returned](#) to their areas of origin, but many more remained displaced due to continued violence. Access to basic needs, including food, water, shelter, health care, and education, [remained](#) a challenge for many returnees who were confronted with massive destruction in their areas of origin. According to [Médecins San Frontières](#) (Doctors Without Borders, MSF), in Mocimboa da Praia, which has the largest number of returnees, most public buildings, including schools, hospitals, and health centers, and water infrastructure were destroyed.

Fighting between Al-Shabab and the Mozambican defense and security forces, with support from Rwanda and SAMIM, [intensified](#) in Macomia district, with militants [reportedly](#) killing several soldiers in [July](#) and [August](#).

In August, the Mozambican armed forces [announced](#) the killing of the alleged Al-Shabab leader Bonomade Machude Omar, also known as Abu Sulayfa Muhammad and Ibn Omar. In September, a month after his death, militants [reportedly returned](#) to Mucojo town, Macomia district, where they allegedly beat three people. Also in September, in an ISIS attack in Naquitengue village, Mocimboa da Praia, armed men [executed](#) at least 11 people believed to be Christians.

Conduct of Security Forces in Cabo Delgado

SAMIM members [were implicated](#) in abuses during their military operations in Cabo Delgado province. In January, a [video](#) appeared on social media showing South African soldiers, who are part of the SAMIM forces, throwing corpses onto a pile of burning rubble. International humanitarian law prohibits the mutilation and other mistreatment of [the dead](#). The Southern African Development Community (SADC) [condemned](#) the acts in the video and announced an investigation, but it has yet to provide any updates on the investigation.

In April, the Mozambican government [gave legal authority to an abusive militia](#) to fight Al-Shabab in the north of the country. The militia, largely consisting of demobilized soldiers, has operated without oversight, accountability, or a legal mandate since 2018, when former soldiers first [offered](#) to fight the insurgency. Their activities have often been associated with [unlawful killings and other human rights abuses](#).

Election-Related Violence

The October 11 municipal elections were marred by [violence](#) and [serious irregularities](#), leading district courts to [order a rerun](#) of the voting or a [recount](#) of votes in many municipalities.

Following the elections, police clashed with opposition party members across the country. They used excessive force and fired tear gas at crowds of opposition supporters backing the political party RENAMO, who were in the streets to either contest the results or to peacefully celebrate non-official results in [Nampula](#), [Cuamba](#), [Moatize](#), and [Vilankulos](#) municipalities.

Police were also implicated in arbitrary detentions of opposition members throughout the election process. On October 12, one day after the voting, police [detained](#) the RENAMO candidate and mayor of Quelimane city, Manuel de Araujo, allegedly because he was visiting polling stations, which [police said](#) was “disturbing” the vote-counting process. Earlier in the month, police in Beira city arrested three members of the Democratic Movement of Mozambique (MDM), a national opposition party in power in that city. They [were released](#) after a judge found no legal basis for their arrests.

Freedom of Assembly and Association

Freedom of peaceful assembly and association was under pressure as the government [submitted](#) for parliamentary approval a draft law on nonprofit organizations that would permit excessive government interference in NGOs, including the authority to shut down an organization. The government said the law intended to [counter money laundering and terrorist financing](#), after the [Financial Activities Task Force](#) (FATF), an influential intergovernmental organization that monitors countries' efforts to counter money laundering and terrorist financing, [placed Mozambique under increased](#) monitoring in 2021. In August, following months of advocacy by rights organizations, parliamentarians [approved](#) a revised draft and warned the government that preventing and combating money laundering and terrorist financing should not be done at the expense of fundamental rights.

Right to Peaceful Protest

State security forces used lethal force and arbitrary arrests and detentions to limit people's right to peaceful protest across the country.

In March, police [used](#) tear gas on the funeral procession of a famous Mozambican rap star, Edson da Luz, known as "[Azagaia](#)," [who died](#) from a sudden illness. As the [funeral convoy and thousands](#) of people approached an area containing the president's official residence in Maputo city, which is off-limits to pedestrian traffic, armored vehicles and dozens of heavily armed riot police blocked the road. The police ordered people to change course and then, without warning, used tear gas to disperse the crowd, causing mass flight.

Also in March, police detained at least three people in Beira city for participating in a tribute march to Azagaia. Police blocked the march halfway through, despite authorization for it to take place. A police source [told](#) journalists that the police had received orders for the march not to take place.

In May, four people [were shot dead](#) when police fired bullets against a group attacking homes and property belonging to local officials, following [false claims](#) about the spread of a cholera outbreak in Nacala-Porto, in the northern province of Nampula.

In August, police [prevented](#) a group of medical doctors from hosting a public health fair in Maputo, organized by the Mozambican Medical Association as part of activities linked to their nationwide strike. Police claimed the group did not have the authorization to hold the event and dispersed the doctors and their patients. A spokesman for the doctors [told](#) local media that they had requested and obtained authorization from the city council and were even allowed to borrow some municipal furniture for the event.

Unresolved Kidnappings

Kidnappings for ransom continued across the country, with police failing to properly investigate the cases. Attorney-General Beatriz Buchili [denounced](#) police complicity in kidnapping cases in Mozambique, claiming the involvement of some "members of the police, lawyers, magistrates, and other figures in the judiciary creates fragilities in investigating these cases."

In January, a Mozambican businessman who had been kidnapped in Matola in December 2022 [was found dead](#), after the kidnappers told his family members to pick him up at a location because his health condition was "very bad."

In July, an owner of a liquor shop in Maputo [was kidnapped](#) in front of his shop in one of the busiest streets in the city. According to local press, members of his family had also been kidnapping victims in the past.

In September, residents [prevented](#) an attempted kidnapping of a businessman at his shop near two police stations in a busy Maputo neighborhood.

Following all these cases, police pledged to investigate, but at time of writing, they had not announced updates on any investigations.

Key International Partners

Mozambique [started](#) a two-year mandate as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. In March, as it [took over](#) the rotating month-long presidency of the council for the first time, President Filipe Nyusi [called](#) for greater coordination between the Security Council and the African Union (AU) to control the spread of terrorism in Africa and the Middle East.

The European Council [approved](#) €20 million to support the deployment of the Rwanda Defense Force in Cabo Delgado province. Additionally, the European Union has supported the Mozambican Armed Forces with €89 million and a Training Mission (EUTM).

In January, United States Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield [visited](#) Mozambique, where she focused on “regional security issues, food insecurity, humanitarian issues, and supporting African efforts to mitigate climate change.”

In June, the chairperson of the AU Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, [welcomed](#) the closure of the last [military base](#) of the former rebel group and main opposition party RENAMO as “a tremendous contribution towards silencing the guns in Africa.”

In July, SADC leaders meeting in the Angolan capital of Luanda [agreed](#) to extend the organization’s military mission in Mozambique for another year to consolidate what they called “gains achieved.”