



# Stemming the Insurrection in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado

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Headquarters

**International Crisis Group**

Avenue Louise 235 • 1050 Brussels, Belgium

Tel: +32 2 502 90 38 • [brussels@crisisgroup.org](mailto:brussels@crisisgroup.org)

*Preventing War. Shaping Peace.*

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	i
I. Introduction .....	1
II. From Grievance to Insurrection.....	3
A. A Province Ripe for Conflict .....	3
B. Religion as a Conflict Vector.....	4
C. A Resource Boom Lights a Fire.....	6
III. Local Insurrection to International Crisis.....	10
A. The Early Phase: Moving Inland from the Coast .....	10
B. Security Forces Turn to Military Contractors.....	12
C. The Onset of an International Crisis .....	14
IV. Al-Shabab’s Evolving Shape, Strength and Behaviour .....	17
V. Transnational Links and the Threat to the Region .....	21
VI. Government and Regional Responses .....	25
A. The Role of the Police and Military .....	25
B. Promises of Development and Humanitarian Aid .....	28
C. Regional Intervention Plans .....	29
D. Security Cooperation with Tanzania .....	31
VII. Stemming the Insurrection .....	33
A. An Urgent but Measured Security Response.....	33
B. Development, Dialogue and Demobilisation.....	34
C. Easing Restrictions on Humanitarian Aid.....	36
D. International Law Enforcement Cooperation .....	37
VIII. Conclusion .....	38
APPENDICES	
A. Map of Mozambique.....	39
B. Chronology of Conflict in Cabo Delgado .....	40
C. Access and Displacement in Cabo Delgado.....	42
D. Reported Fatalities in Cabo Delgado (January 2017-April 2021).....	43
E. Map of Organised Political Violence in Cabo Delgado (2017-2020) .....	44
F. Violence Targeting Civilians in Cabo Delgado (2017-2021) .....	45
G. Timeline of ISIS-Claimed Attacks (June 2019-March 2021).....	46
H. About the International Crisis Group .....	47
I. Crisis Group Reports and Briefings on Africa since 2018.....	48
J. Crisis Group Board of Trustees .....	51

# Principal Findings

**What's new?** Militant attacks and security force operations in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province have claimed nearly 3,000 lives, while displacing hundreds of thousands of people. Insecurity has prompted the suspension of a massive gas project. The Islamic State (ISIS) claims ties to the insurrection. Southern African governments are lobbying to send troops.

**Why did it happen?** Mozambican militants have been motivated by grievances against a state that they see as delivering little for them, despite the development of major mineral and hydrocarbon deposits. Tanzanians and other foreigners have joined up, fuelling the insurrection. The country's historically weak security forces have been unable to stem the onslaught.

**Why does it matter?** Unaddressed, the insurrection could spread further, threatening national stability just as Mozambique is fulfilling a peace deal with the country's main opposition group and heading into national elections in 2024. It could worsen instability along East Africa's coast and present ISIS with a new front to exploit.

**What should be done?** Maputo should accept targeted assistance for security operations to contain the insurrection, and avoid a heavy external deployment that could lead to a quagmire. Authorities should deploy aid to build trust with locals and open dialogue with militants. Regional governments should redouble law enforcement efforts to block transnational jihadist involvement.

## *Executive Summary*

Fears are mounting that Mozambique's Muslim-dominated province of Cabo Delgado could become the next frontier for prolonged jihadist rebellion on the continent. Since 2017, Mozambican militants backed by Tanzanians and other foreigners have thwarted the weak security forces' efforts to defeat them and perpetrated atrocities against civilians. Thousands have died and hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced. The Islamic State (ISIS) global core claims it is behind the insurrection. While keen to respond militarily, Maputo also needs to deal with the set of local factors that have spurred Mozambican rank-and-file militants into battle. The government should take military assistance from external partners but use force wisely to contain the militants' expansion while it ramps up efforts to persuade as many of them as possible to demobilise. To that end, it should channel aid to communities and use them and other influencers to open dialogue with Mozambican militants and tackle their grievances. Regional countries should step up efforts to interdict foreign support for the insurrection.

Cabo Delgado is a province that has long been ripe for conflict. In 2007, frustrated youth in the province's southern districts dominated by ethnic Makua began denouncing the authority of local religious leaders, especially those close to the country's official Muslim council. By the mid-2010s, ethnic Mwani militants in the coastal district of Mocímboa da Praia had joined the fray. Their activism had an Islamist tinge: they pushed for alcohol bans while opposing the enrolment of children in state schools and the right of women to work. But it was also fuelled by their economic exclusion amid the discovery of rubies and natural gas. They resented, too, the influence of liberation-era generals who have business interests in the province and are drawn from President Filipe Nyusi's Makonde ethnic group. Amid this boiling resentment, authorities expelled artisanal miners from commercial mining concessions in early 2017, further feeding local discontent. Militants, known to locals as al-Shabab (not to be confused with Al-Shabaab, the jihadist group in Somalia) moved to armed revolt in October 2017.

At first dismissing the militants as criminals, officials now refer to them as "terrorists". In so doing, they admit the problem is greater than initially thought, but the rhetoric also fuels a perception that global jihadism is the only reason for the threat. Fighters from neighbouring Tanzania, many of whom are part of Islamist networks that have proliferated on the Swahili coast of East Africa are, indeed, among the militants' leaders. But the bulk of the group's rank and file are Mozambicans, including poor fishermen, frustrated petty traders, former farmers and unemployed youth. Their motivations for joining and staying with the group are diverse but less shaped by ideology than by desire to assert power locally and to obtain the material benefits that accrue to them via the barrel of a gun. If the group is still growing, it is because it is managing to draw on recruits who see joining and staying with al-Shabab as a good career move. That said, some of the Mozambican militant core may well, by now, be committed jihadists.

Maputo is meanwhile struggling to contain a group that is growing in strength on land and which can also operate in waters off the coast. The army, which significantly shrank after the 1992 peace deal ending the country's civil war, is in disrepair, a soft target for militants who have overrun many of its positions and plundered its weapons stockpiles. It is also stretched, having to guarantee security in the centre of the country while it tries to achieve the final surrender of a residual armed faction of the Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (Renamo) opposition group. The navy, meanwhile, is barely functioning. Under pressure to respond to the Cabo Delgado crisis, Nyusi dispatched elite paramilitary police units with air support from a South African private military company. This joint force stopped the militants' advance toward the provincial capital Pemba and destroyed some of their camps but was unable to neutralise them. In March, militants stormed Palma, the gateway to major gas fields, prompting the French multinational Total to halt development.

Mozambique's government has thus been pressing its foreign partners to provide the resources, including lethal assistance, that it says it needs to build up its military, which Nyusi now wants to be the primary force tasked with fighting militants. Mozambique's Western partners say they want to help but their diplomats say their capitals will be reluctant to supply materiel to the military without the institution going through significant training and reforms. Those partners are concerned, too, about reports of abuses committed against the population by security forces and potential leaks of government weapons into militants' hands as a result of alleged graft and indiscipline.

Southern African Development Community (SADC) states, which see Cabo Delgado's conflict as endangering their own security, are meanwhile seeking to build international support to deploy their own troops into Mozambique. Nyusi has been nervous about that happening. His critics say he wants to keep prying eyes out of the province, a zone for illicit activity including heroin trafficking that benefits elites. His supporters emphasise rather that he is just being careful about what kind of intervention he allows, wary that a heavy presence of foreign troops could become difficult to control and could end up in a quagmire. After the Palma attack, Nyusi, who is currently SADC chairman, has come under further pressure from the regional bloc. He is, however, courting other security partners, including Rwanda, whose troops could be used to provide Mozambican security forces combat support.

Whichever partners he chooses, any external intervention should be measured in how it uses force, so that it can both respond to the very real security threat posed by the militants but also eventually allocate enough resources to protect civilians when they return to their native districts. A heavy deployment of regional troops unfamiliar with the local terrain may not be necessary. Instead, Maputo should welcome bespoke African and international assistance to support its own special forces, who are receiving training primarily from a few Western partners. It should task these special forces to spearhead restricted military operations to contain and then degrade al-Shabab. Patrolling territorial waters could also deny militants opportunities to move fighters and supplies via coastal waters. If residents can be persuaded to return to areas they vacated, Mozambique's other forces should focus on providing security around these population centres to benefit civilians and humanitarian actors.

A security plan like this would pressure al-Shabab militarily but also leave space for authorities to seek a negotiated end to the conflict. Besides needing to win back aggrieved locals' loyalty, they also need to induce militants lured by weapons, money and abducted women used as sex slaves to give up violence. Maputo should use its new development agency for the north to start dialogues with civilians in areas where security permits and to work out with them how best to spend donor aid, soothe local tensions and rebuild trust with communities who feel let down by the state. Such dialogue might also help authorities open lines of communication with Mozambican militants, given how deeply al-Shabab's own recruitment network is embedded in society. If they can reach back this way, authorities could seek ways to encourage the militants' demobilisation and possible participation in local security arrangements. Maputo may need to offer them security guarantees, and in some cases amnesties, after they exit.

In the meantime, East and Southern African countries should, via their regional blocs, also start exploring how they can conduct joint law enforcement operations to stymie any support to al-Shabab from transnational militants, including ISIS, whose influence over the group appears weak for now. Such operations should focus on stopping attempts by individuals to finance, train or provide new technologies to al-Shabab. Their success will require Mozambique and Tanzania in particular to share information with their international partners about al-Shabab networks that have been operating across their borders.

After more than three years of violence in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique and its regional partners are gearing up to respond together to the threat. They are right to put their heads together. Cabo Delgado's population craves safety and wants the security forces to act, petrified that otherwise they could end up abducted or killed. A security response is necessary. The government and its allies also need to think carefully, however, about how they can address the grievances underpinning a rapidly expanding challenge that in essence started as a local revolt.

**Maputo/Nairobi/Brussels, 11 June 2021**

# Stemming the Insurrection in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado

## I. Introduction

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Once the cradle of Mozambique's war of liberation from colonial occupation, the resource-rich but impoverished northern province of Cabo Delgado is today home to another conflict critical to the country's destiny. Since 2017, groups of fighters, often carrying black Islamic State (ISIS) flags and denouncing the state and the Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Frelimo) ruling party, have grown from small units targeting remote security posts into heavily equipped companies whose attacks threaten not only national stability but also international peace and security. In the last eighteen months, fighters have stepped up raids, including on some of the province's main towns, resulting in more civilian casualties. Hundreds of thousands of people have fled their homes. Insecurity has also prompted the French multinational Total to suspend a multi-billion-dollar liquefied gas project on which the government hangs its hopes for the country's future development. Neighbouring capitals now fear the crisis could become a magnet for transnational jihadists who might conduct terrorist attacks in the region.

Following the brazen March 2021 attack on the northern town of Palma, gateway to giant gas fields, President Filipe Nyusi is under pressure from regional allies to counter the militants, whom the U.S. now labels part of the Islamic State.<sup>1</sup> A Mozambican special police unit fighting in conjunction with South African mercenaries was unable to defeat the group. The president is now increasingly looking to Mozambique's military to do the job. This institution is in a state of disrepair, however, and requires a serious upgrade that will take time. Member states of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) are thus pushing to make some kind of intervention in Cabo Delgado. But Mozambican authorities are wary of allowing in a heavy regional deployment they fear could lead to a messy quagmire. In the meantime, the president has opened a new conversation with President Paul Kagame to assess whether Rwanda's security forces can provide targeted support.

This report looks at how the Cabo Delgado conflict is unfolding as the country also implements its peace process with the Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (Renamo) opposition group and heads toward the 2024 election, when, as the constitution requires, President Nyusi must step down after two terms in office.<sup>2</sup> It offers ideas about what foreign military intervention should look like and concentrate on if it does

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<sup>1</sup> See "Understanding the New U.S. Terrorism Designations in Africa", Crisis Group Commentary, 18 March 2021.

<sup>2</sup> War between Frelimo and Renamo ended with the 1992 General Peace Accords, supervised by the UN Operation in Mozambique until 1994. In mid-2013, Renamo resumed its insurgency, resulting in a series of stop-start negotiations that culminated in an accord signed on 6 August 2019 giving birth to a new disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process that is now under way. A breakaway faction, known as the Renamo Military Junta, under the leadership of Mariano Nhongo, does not recognise the peace deal and fights on from a base in central Mozambique.

go ahead. It also proposes other ideas about how to reverse militants' gains and defang the insurrection. Research involved interviews in February and March 2021 in Maputo and Cabo Delgado with government officials, diplomats, humanitarian workers, security sources, businesspeople, religious and community leaders, politicians and victims of violence. Additional research took place in South Africa, and via remote interviews with sources in Tanzania, East and Southern African countries between December 2020 and May 2021.



## II. From Grievance to Insurrection

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### A. A Province Ripe for Conflict

Separated from Maputo by some 2,000km of coastline, Cabo Delgado is a province whose political economy has been shaped by the war of independence and its aftermath. Following the end of Portuguese rule in Mozambique in 1975, senior Frelimo liberation-era figures drawn from the Makonde tribe prevalent in the province's northern plateau claimed top positions for themselves, including provincial governorships, while placing their allies in national administrative and military posts as a reward for their central role in the struggle against colonial occupation.<sup>3</sup> The fifteen years from 1977 to 1992 saw illicit trade proliferate in Cabo Delgado, as local elites enriched themselves by smuggling timber, precious stones and ivory, without being encumbered by the government in Maputo or affected by Frelimo's war with Renamo, which barely touched the province.<sup>4</sup>

Since the 1990s, the province's economy has only become further characterised by forms of monopoly and illicit activity, much of which ties back to senior Frelimo figures and their business allies. As the civil war receded into memory, senior Makonde continued to dominate Cabo Delgado's politics and economy. Over the next years, top Makonde generals who had been key figures in the liberation war, including those who went on to serve as governors, began focusing on expanding their business interests in the province. These included forestry, mining and transport operations that were often backed by state loans.<sup>5</sup> In the same period, Cabo Delgado's remote coastline also became a documented hotspot for the import and transshipment of heroin and other narcotics via cartels run by Mozambicans of South Asian descent who received protection from Frelimo's uppermost echelons at both the provincial and national levels.<sup>6</sup> The proceeds from such illicit trade washed through the political system, keeping Maputo content with the status quo in Cabo Delgado.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Mozambican academic, Maputo, February 2020; Frelimo central committee member, Maputo, March 2021. The Makonde were the backbone of the Frelimo force fighting the Portuguese. Two of the top liberation-era Makonde, Raimundo Pachinuapa and Alberto Chipande, served respectively as governor of Cabo Delgado and national defence minister under Mozambique's first post-independence president, Samora Machel. Chipande would later serve as governor of Cabo Delgado, also under Machel. Both men are still in Frelimo's political commission, the highest body within the ruling party's structure. See also João Cabrita, *Mozambique: The Tortuous Road to Democracy* (London, 2001); and "Mozambique: A Political Economy Analysis," Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, October 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Mozambican academic, Maputo, February 2021; top Frelimo official, Maputo, March 2021.

<sup>5</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Frelimo-linked businessperson, December 2021; Mozambican investigative journalist, February 2021. See also "President Filipe Nyusi's northern allies on the lookout for good deals", *Africa Intelligence*, 16 February 2017; and "The Quionga network", *Africa Confidential*, 12 April 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Crisis Group interview, counter-narcotics source, February 2021. See also "The Heroin Coast: A Political Economy along the Eastern African Seaboard", Enact Research Paper, June 2018.

<sup>7</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Mozambican anti-corruption researcher, Maputo, February 2021; counter-narcotics law enforcement source, March 2021. For an exposé of drug smuggling in Mozambique, see "A Triangle of Vulnerability: Changing Patterns of Illicit Trafficking off the Swahili Coast", Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime, June 2020, pp. 22-24.

Senior Frelimo officials acknowledge that the ruling party and the post-liberation governments in Mozambique did not transform Cabo Delgado's war economy. They admit being preoccupied with areas nearer the capital. "We paid a lot of attention to the development of the regions of the south and the central part of the country where the war with Renamo took place, but in so doing we also have to take the blame for having neglected Cabo Delgado", said a top Frelimo official in Maputo.<sup>8</sup>

While poverty certainly aggravated local tensions, some socio-economic indicators are worse in other northern provinces. Other factors helped make the province ripe for conflict.<sup>9</sup> Mozambican social scientists suggest that colonial-era tensions between the Mwani and Makua peoples, on one side, and the Makonde, on the other, have grown since liberation and now shape conflict dynamics. They say, however, that these tensions are political rather than inherently tribal.<sup>10</sup> Many Mwani, alienated by the dominance of the Makonde elites after independence, have remained sympathetic to Renamo and, with a large number of Makua, have become a major source of recruits for the insurrection.<sup>11</sup> In the words of one senior government official working in Cabo Delgado: "What has happened is essentially a protest against socio-economic asymmetries and inequalities".<sup>12</sup>

## B. *Religion as a Conflict Vector*

Young people's anger at inequality and their political exclusion bloomed in the post-war period, which was also marked by a period of change for Islamic denominations active in Muslim-dominated Cabo Delgado. On this front, two trends were visible.

First, in the late 1990s, came the return of Mozambican students who had been sent abroad to study by the Islamic Council of Mozambique (Cislamo), a Salafi denomination that had allied with Frelimo in the 1980s, when the party was looking to co-opt segments of the Muslim community and broaden its connections to Arab states.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Crisis Group interview, Maputo, March 2021.

<sup>9</sup> See the World Bank's Mozambique Poverty Assessment (April 2018) for detailed, province-by-province comparisons of socio-economic indicators.

<sup>10</sup> Crisis Group interview, Mozambican academic, Maputo, February 2021. See Ana Margarida Sousa Santos, "History, Memory and Violence: Changing Patterns of Group Relationship in Mocímboa da Praia, Mozambique", PhD thesis, St Antony's College, University of Oxford, 2010, for descriptions of how Portugal's relationship to the Mwani coastal community up to the 20th century, as well as the mass conversion to Christianity of the Makonde in the 20th century, played a role in setting the two communities apart from each other. See also "Asymmetries in Access to the State: A Fertile Land for the Prevention of Islamic Jihadism", Observatório do Meio Rural, June 2020; and Eric Morier-Genoud, "The Jihadi Insurgency in Mozambique: Origins, Nature and Beginning", *Journal of East African Studies*, vol. 14, no. 3 (July 2020). "Identifying Resiliencies in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique", ALPS Resilience in association with Joaquim Chissano University, December 2020, details current tensions between the Makonde and Mwani.

<sup>11</sup> See Ana Margarida Santos, "The Past in the Present: Memories of the Liberation Struggle in Northern Mozambique", St. Antony's College, Oxford, 2011, for a description of how Mwani and Makonde tended to be Renamo and Frelimo supporters, respectively, as well as for an account of 2005 riots in Mocímboa da Praia when Renamo mobilised protests of local election results partly along ethnic Mwani lines.

<sup>12</sup> Crisis Group interview, government official, Pemba, February 2021.

<sup>13</sup> Cislamo was created in 1981 and has a predominantly Wahhabist leadership. It grew close to the Frelimo leadership under President Machel, who had earlier seen Islam as anathema to his devel-

The return of these young men, who had studied in Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Sudan and Saudi Arabia, was part of a pattern of growing Salafi influence in Mozambique and financed by foreign states and charities. With the influx of devotees and cash over the next decade came a new circuit of mosques and madrasas built across the Muslim-majority north, including Cabo Delgado. This trend challenged traditional Sufi orders that had long dominated coastal enclaves, and areas deep in northern Mozambique's interior, and whose practices had adapted to local customs over centuries.<sup>14</sup>

Secondly, even as newer religious establishments in Cabo Delgado propagated more doctrinaire Islamic practices, youth in the province's coastal areas were consuming other religious teachings prevalent on the Swahili coast of East Africa, where Islamist and jihadist networks had proliferated since the 1990s.<sup>15</sup> Some of these young men, including petty traders, had established commercial and other ties up the coast via the small caucus of smugglers and merchants from Tanzania, Kenya and Somalia in Cabo Delgado's port of Mocímboa da Praia with whom they together formed both business and religious associations.<sup>16</sup> These groups in turn helped disseminate pamphlets espousing the propaganda of Aboud Rogo, a Kenyan cleric who before his assassination in 2012 was associated with al-Qaeda's East African networks and Somalia's Al-Shabaab movement.<sup>17</sup> Rogo had become something of a cult hero in Kenya after his arrest in 2002 and acquittal in 2005.<sup>18</sup>

By early 2007, early signs of local militancy appeared in Cabo Delgado, particularly in the Makua-dominated areas of the province's south and south west. Religious and communal leaders from Cabo Delgado describe aggressive behaviour by youths who began challenging the established Sufi religious orders and Cislamo in these districts, accusing both of acquiescence with the authorities.<sup>19</sup> They also began trying

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opment ideology. Cislamo became an important ally of the ruling party, which began looking to cement ties with Muslims for political reasons. Frelimo leaders warmed to the Council also because they saw it as representing a modernising vein of Islam, based on Arabic literacy. Crisis Group interview, Frelimo central committee member, Maputo, March 2021. See also Liazzat J.K. Bonate, "Muslim Religious Leadership in Post-Colonial Mozambique", *South African Historical Journal*, vol. 60, no. 4 (2008).

<sup>14</sup> Bonate, "Muslim Religious Leadership in Post-Colonial Mozambique", op. cit. See also Eric Morier-Genoud, "L'Islam au Mozambique après l'indépendance: Histoire d'une montée en puissance", in Christian Coulon (ed.), *L'Afrique politique 2002* (Paris, 2002), pp. 123-146.

<sup>15</sup> Crisis Group interviews, communal leader, Pemba, February 2021; Cislamo cleric, Maputo, March 2021. See also Saide Habibe, Salvador Forquilha and João Pereira, "Islamic Radicalization in Northern Mozambique: The Case of Mocimboa da Praia", Institute for Social and Economic Studies, 2019.

<sup>16</sup> Crisis Group interviews, businessperson with interests in Mocímboa da Praia, Maputo, February 2021; businessperson from Mocímboa da Praia, Pemba, February 2021.

<sup>17</sup> Crisis Group interviews, former Mocímboa da Praia resident, Pemba, February 2021; regional intelligence source, Nairobi, March 2021. See also Ngala Chome, "Eastern Africa's Regional Extremist Threat: Origins, Nature and Policy Options", Centre for Human Rights and Policy, September 2020.

<sup>18</sup> Crisis Group interview, regional intelligence source, Nairobi, March 2021. See also Chome, "Eastern Africa's Regional Extremist Threat", op. cit.; and Hassan Ndzovu, "Struggle against Secular Power: The Prospects of Islamism in Kenya as Epitomized by Sheikh Aboud Rogo's Sermons", *Annual Review of Islam in Africa*, vol. 12, no. 2 (2015). It is noteworthy that Rogo also held fundamentalist positions on women and girls' rights and social roles.

<sup>19</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Muslim leader, Pemba, February 2021; retired Frelimo official and community elder, Pemba, February 2021. These and other sources say the first signs of militancy showed up in Balama district in Cabo Delgado's far south west, before migrating east to Chiuri and on to

to block the enrolment of children in secular schools and accusing local religious leaders, including those from Cislamo, of hypocrisy and apostasy. Dressed in short-ened trousers, in fashion among their East African brethren, and occasionally brandishing knives, they began setting up their own prayer houses or informal mosques in private residences in different villages.<sup>20</sup> Local authorities often confronted these youths, arresting them before releasing them for lack of formal charges.<sup>21</sup>

Frelimo officials, local religious and communal leaders and scholars of Cabo Delgado explain that despite their many attempts to flag these developments within the party and to local officials, the government never developed a strategy to deal with this emerging problem, besides the mass arrests.<sup>22</sup> While on one level, the crisis appeared to be a sign of Islamist militancy on the rise, it was also a rebellion of primarily Mwani and Makua youth in a province with a Muslim majority against local Sufi religious leaders and an organisation, Cislamo, which they saw as one of the Frelimo state's closest allies.

### C. *A Resource Boom Lights a Fire*

The tensions in Cabo Delgado appeared to heighten after 2009, as the state earmarked the province as a future source of mining and hydrocarbon revenue. A rich deposit of rubies was discovered in the western district of Montepuez in 2009, followed by giant reserves of natural gas in the seabed off Palma. Beginning in 2010, the state cleared residents off the land it eventually allocated to the mining and hydrocarbon concession holders.<sup>23</sup> A top Makonde general who says he had previously acquired rights to the land around the deposit entered a partnership with an industrial miner, generating feelings of exclusion among mainly Makua communities living near the new concession.<sup>24</sup> While locals around the gas development near Palma secured relocation packages from the multinational companies, many complained about those deals' lack of transparency, the loss of their livelihoods as they were displaced, and lack of access to job opportunities with the oil and gas operations.<sup>25</sup>

Frelimo's choice of Filipe Nyusi as its candidate for the 2014 presidential election was meanwhile a sign that the old Makonde heavyweights were calling in claims to

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Mocímboa da Praia via Macomia. See also Morier-Genoud, "The Jihadi Insurgency in Mozambique", op. cit.

<sup>20</sup> Crisis Group interview, Muslim leader, Pemba, February 2021. Said Habibe, Salvador Forquilha and João Pereira, "Radicalização Islâmica no Norte de Moçambique: O Caso de Mocímboa da Praia", Instituto de Estudos Sociais Economicos (Maputo), 17 September 2019.

<sup>21</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Muslim leader, Pemba, February 2021; senior legal official, Maputo, March 2021.

<sup>22</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Muslim religious leader, Frelimo elder, Pemba, February 2021; Frelimo central committee member, Maputo, March 2021.

<sup>23</sup> Estacio Valoi, "The blood rubies of Montepuez", *Foreign Policy*, 3 May 2016. See also "Oil and Gas Investments in Palma District, Mozambique", Shared Value Foundation and LANDac, February 2019. Crisis Group interview, Frelimo-linked businessman, Maputo, March 2021.

<sup>24</sup> Crisis Group interviews, former ruby miner, Pemba, February 2021; Frelimo businessman with operations in Cabo Delgado, Maputo, March 2021. See also Valoi, "The blood rubies of Montepuez", op. cit.

<sup>25</sup> Crisis Group interview, former community liaison officer for oil and gas multinational, Pemba, February 2021.

have the top position in government allocated to them. Some senior party members say an unwritten rule always stipulated that power would eventually rotate into the hands of this caucus, which has waited in line behind a succession of southern presidents since independence.<sup>26</sup> They also note, however, that the Makonde cohort was particularly keen to take control of the presidency at this moment, as Cabo Delgado was emerging as the epicentre of Mozambique's resource bonanza.<sup>27</sup> In the end, the choice of Nyusi, a younger Makonde, represented a tense compromise between the caucuses loyal to the Makonde generals and the outgoing president Armando Guebuza, who had been seeking a third term of office, and under whom Nyusi had served as defence minister.<sup>28</sup>

The 2014 election, which took place amid a ceasefire between the state and Renamo, was not the cakewalk for the ruling party that previous elections had been.<sup>29</sup> Nyusi scored only 57 per cent of the vote, much lower than Guebuza's margin of victory in 2009. The drop-off reflected Renamo's resurgence at that time but also the divisions within Frelimo that had come to the fore.<sup>30</sup> Nyusi still won in a landslide in Cabo Delgado itself, however.<sup>31</sup> Some Frelimo officials say that even though Nyusi has a strong political following in the north, the party achieved its sizeable victory in the province in part due to its distribution of patronage.<sup>32</sup>

After the elections, Makonde business elites began to show greater bullishness in acquiring economic power in Cabo Delgado. They spread their money around among district Makonde party stalwarts and local chiefs, entrenching the community's power base down to the grassroots.<sup>33</sup> State allocations of war veteran pensions in Cabo Delgado also became more heavily skewed to favour Makonde recipients.<sup>34</sup> As a result, working-class Makonde were also able to buy up land in parts of the province, including along the Mwani-dominated coast.<sup>35</sup> Frustration among Mwani youth reignited, particularly as they were also enduring extortion by local officials interfering with their small businesses and fishing operations.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> All the post-independence presidents, Machel, Joaquim Chissano and Armando Guebuza, are southerners, although Guebuza was born in northern Nampula province, where his father was working at the time.

<sup>27</sup> Crisis Group interview, Frelimo sources, Maputo, March 2021.

<sup>28</sup> See Adriano Nuvunga, "Mozambique's 2014 Elections: A Repeat of Misconduct, Political Tension and Frelimo Dominance", *Journal of African Elections*, vol. 16, no. 2 (2017), for descriptions of Guebuza's attempts to run for a third term and Nyusi's emergence as a compromise candidate.

<sup>29</sup> See "Mozambique election: Will Frelimo retain power", BBC, 14 October 2014.

<sup>30</sup> Nuvunga, "Mozambique's 2014 Elections", *op. cit.*

<sup>31</sup> Nyusi's share of the Cabo Delgado vote was close to 78 per cent in the 2014 election. Comissão Nacional de Eleições Moçambique.

<sup>32</sup> Frelimo central committee member, Maputo, March 2021.

<sup>33</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Frelimo official with business interests in Cabo Delgado, Maputo, March 2021; Mozambican anti-corruption researcher, Maputo, February 2021.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* See also "Asymmetries in Access to the State", *op. cit.*

<sup>35</sup> Crisis Group interviews, foreign intelligence source, Maputo, February 2021; Mozambican researcher on Cabo Delgado, Maputo, February 2021; senior Frelimo official with business interests in Cabo Delgado, Maputo, March 2021.

<sup>36</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Mozambican researcher on Cabo Delgado, Maputo, February 2021; civil society leader, Pemba, February 2021; former resident of Mocímboa da Praia district, Metuge, February 2021. Sources describe widespread shakedowns of small traders and fishermen by local secu-

Sources from Mocímboa da Praia report that as these local tensions heated up around the end of 2014, Mwani youth who were known among traders began mysteriously vanishing from the port town. Locals reported that some of them had in fact travelled to countries up the Swahili coast of East Africa and even farther afield. This trend was matched by a wave of migrants landing at Mocímboa da Praia, a mix of other Mozambicans and foreigners.<sup>37</sup> Sources working in the town's banks at that time report that substantial amounts of money flowed into Mocímboa da Praia from Somalia and elsewhere.<sup>38</sup>

By 2015, reports were proliferating about increasingly aggressive behaviour by the same youth gangs clashing with religious authorities in several Cabo Delgado districts. In the first instance, scuffles broke out between them and local leaders, as they became even pushier, for example by attempting to impose bans on alcohol, disrupting prayers at mosques, forcing women to wear the niqab or burqa and preventing women from working outside the home.<sup>39</sup> As they clashed with local government and religious officials, the state began to fight back. Security forces arrested groups of youths and closed their prayer houses.<sup>40</sup> By 2016, sources in Cabo Delgado were reporting armed elements establishing a presence in remote parts of Mocímboa da Praia district.<sup>41</sup>

The authorities stoked further discontent in early 2017, when they expelled thousands of artisanal miners digging in the ruby fields under the commercial concession near Montepuez. Since the discovery of the ruby deposits in 2009, thousands of prospectors from elsewhere in Mozambique or Tanzania and other parts of Africa had arrived in the area to search for gems, often coming into confrontation with police and mining security guards patrolling the concession on behalf of the industrial operation.<sup>42</sup> Those lucky enough to evade the guards and find rubies sold them to Tanzanian, Thai and Sri Lankan buyers in Montepuez but also, in smaller quantities, to traders in Mocímboa da Praia. The authorities however eventually kicked out thousands of miners and traders, both foreigners and Mozambicans. The expulsions, which were violent, also thus deprived some of the Mwani and foreign traders in Mocímboa da Praia of an income stream. Several former miners joined the militants.<sup>43</sup> “This

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rity service officers and officials, in contrast to many larger business operators who receive the state's protection.

<sup>37</sup> Crisis Group interview, businessperson from Mocímboa da Praia, Pemba, February 2021.

<sup>38</sup> Crisis Group interviews, source with relative working in a bank in Mocímboa da Praia at the time, Maputo, February 2021; Mozambican investigative journalist, Maputo, February 2021; Mozambican intelligence source, Pemba, February 2021.

<sup>39</sup> Morier-Genoud, “The Jihadi Insurgency in Mozambique”, op. cit.

<sup>40</sup> Crisis Group interview, Frelimo elder, Pemba, February 2021.

<sup>41</sup> Crisis Group interview, communal elder, February 2021. By 2016, the group was active in Palma, Nangade, Mocímboa da Praia and Montepuez, and also had a presence in Macmoia and Quissanga. Morier-Genoud, “The Jihadi Insurgency in Mozambique”, op. cit.

<sup>42</sup> Valoi, “The blood rubies of Montepuez”, op. cit. Crisis Group interview, former miner near Montepuez, Pemba, February 2021. In 2019, the mining firm Gemfields, which runs one of the biggest ruby concessions in Montepuez, agreed to pay \$8.3 million to settle 273 claims of killings and human rights abuses that occurred between 2011 and 2018. See “Ruby miner Gemfields to pay \$8.3mn to settle Montepuez torture and murder claims”, *Club of Mozambique*, 29 January 2019.

<sup>43</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Mozambican intelligence source, former miner, Pemba, February 2021.

was now war against the Makonde top dogs behind the concession”, says one former miner.<sup>44</sup>

By now, militant youths across the province were trying to come up with a name for themselves. Some referred to themselves as members of Ahlu Sunna Wal Jam-mah, which literally translates as the “adherents of the Prophet’s words and deeds and the community of his followers”. This name never gained traction, however.<sup>45</sup> Both militants and locals instead began using the label al-Shabab, Arabic for “the youth”, although not in any way to suggest that the group in Mozambique was linked to the separate Al-Shabaab insurgency in Somalia.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Crisis Group interview, former artisanal miner, Pemba, February 2021.

<sup>45</sup> Crisis Group interviews, local researcher, community worker in Cabo Delgado, Pemba, February 2021.

<sup>46</sup> Civilians also refer to fighters locally as *machababos*. This report uses the term al-Shabab when referring to Cabo Delgado’s militants and Al-Shabaab when referring to the separate movement in Somalia.

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### III. Local Insurrection to International Crisis

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An armed phase of the insurrection soon started. It would accelerate into a humanitarian catastrophe and threat to regional stability. Almost 3,000 people would lose their lives and hundreds of thousands flee their homes and native districts in the next three and a half years of conflict.<sup>47</sup>

#### A. *The Early Phase: Moving Inland from the Coast*

The violence in Cabo Delgado started in the port town of Mocímboa da Praia and quickly spread. On 5 October 2017, around 30 fighters stormed the town's police stations, raided their armouries and battled security forces for more than a day, leaving more than a dozen dead, including several of their own number.<sup>48</sup> Residents who encountered the fighters just prior to the assault said they wanted only to attack the state and not to pay taxes.<sup>49</sup> Three days later, security forces had retaken the town. Over the rest of the month, however, militants mounted additional attacks on security forces nearby. They also raided the coastal town of Olumbi, some 70km north toward the town of Palma, the gateway to the major gas project on the Afungi peninsula, then run by the U.S. multinational Anadarko.<sup>50</sup>

Security forces hit back with mass arrests and counterattacks, but in so doing stoked local grievances further. They first began arresting suspected militants and collaborators, eventually detaining hundreds.<sup>51</sup> In December, they mounted an air, land and sea attack on the village of Mitumbate, near Mocímboa da Praia town, understood to be a militant stronghold at the time. The attack reportedly killed a substantial number of al-Shabab fighters, but also sparked anger from residents who claimed that women and children had been caught in the crossfire.<sup>52</sup> As the militants regrouped, they spent the first few months of 2018 attacking security forces and raiding villages for supplies.

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<sup>47</sup> The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) estimates that 33 people were killed in violence in 2017, 209 in 2018, 689 in 2019 and 1,510 in 2020.

<sup>48</sup> Some researchers point to a 17 August 2017 raid on a police station in neighbouring Nampula province as the first case of an al-Shabab attack. See "Desconhecidos atacam posto da polícia e matam um agente", VOA, 28 August 2017.

<sup>49</sup> See Eric Morier-Genoud, "Why Islamist attack demands a careful response from Mozambique", *The Conversation*, 18 October 2017. Crisis Group interview, Mozambican researcher who covered the attack, Pemba, February 2021.

<sup>50</sup> See "Mozambique's first Islamist attacks shock the region", Institute for Security Studies, 27 October 2017. "Islamist raids continuing in Mocímboa da Praia – AIM Report", *Club of Mozambique*, 4 December 2017. Database of attack data produced by Mozambique-based diplomat, reviewed by Crisis Group.

<sup>51</sup> "Mozambique: Mocímboa da Praia – 52 people arrested", *All Africa*, 11 October 2017. By July 2018, according to ACLED's estimate, over 400 people had been arrested. See Gregory Pirio, Robert Pittelli and Yussuf Adam, "The Emergence of Violent Extremism in Northern Mozambique", Africa Centre for Strategic Studies, 25 March 2018; "Mozambique 2019 International Religious Freedom Report", U.S. Department of State, 2019. While they eventually prosecuted hundreds, authorities had no case against many of them and so set them free. Crisis Group interviews, Muslim leader, Pemba, February 2021; senior legal official, Maputo, March 2021.

<sup>52</sup> See "Police launch 'manhunt' in Mocímboa da Praia", *Club of Mozambique*, 28 December 2017. Crisis Group interview, local Mozambican researcher, Pemba, February 2021.



From the middle of May, militants spread farther south into coastal districts of Macomia and Quissanga, and faced little resistance from security forces, leaving civilians to suffer dreadful abuses.<sup>53</sup> Al-Shabab fighters reportedly beheaded ten civilians in Palma district in late May.<sup>54</sup> During the course of June, militants also raided villages in districts already under their influence where they burned homes and hacked people to death, forcing thousands to flee.<sup>55</sup> In July, they also made bold raids against security force posts in Mocímboa da Praia and Palma districts, capturing their weapons.<sup>56</sup>

By late 2018, al-Shabab fighters had come to dominate the four main districts accounting for most of Cabo Delgado's coastline but also begun moving inland. Between November and the end of December, militants stepped up raids on remote villages across the districts under their sway, particularly Palma and Macomia, but also farther inland in Nangade and Muidumbe, both of which have significant Makonde populations.<sup>57</sup>

As the crisis entered 2019, militants began to show more confidence in engaging state security forces and ambushing transport routes in the coastal districts. On 21 February, they attacked separate Anadarko convoys in Palma district, killing a company contractor and sending alarm through the gas industry.<sup>58</sup> In April, fighters raided a military base in Mocímboa da Praia district, reportedly making off with a significant quantity of weapons.<sup>59</sup> With the province reeling from Cyclone Kenneth, militants continued to resist security forces' attacks.<sup>60</sup> In early June, they beat off an operation in Mocímboa da Praia. ISIS propaganda channels celebrated the counter-attack, saying the fighters were "soldiers of the caliphate".<sup>61</sup> After security forces reportedly killed 26 fighters in Nangade district in mid-June, the militants rebounded with attacks on police and killings of civilians, including more beheadings, in several districts.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Crisis Group interview, security source, Pemba, February 2021. Security sources refer to al-Shabab's Siri base, in Macomia territory, as one of its centres of gravity.

<sup>54</sup> See "At least 10 beheaded in Mozambique attack: State radio", Reuters, 29 May 2018.

<sup>55</sup> Database of attack data produced by Mozambique-based diplomat, reviewed by Crisis Group. "Mozambique: Armed Groups Burn Villages", Human Rights Watch, 19 June 2018. See also "Attackers hack seven to death in Mozambique", Al Jazeera, 5 June 2018, for details of one of the many attacks in Macomia in this period.

<sup>56</sup> Database of attack data produced by Mozambique-based diplomat, reviewed by Crisis Group.

<sup>57</sup> In two separate incidents in the first half of December, residents of Nangade launched retaliatory attacks against suspected militants. Database of attack data produced by Mozambique-based diplomat, reviewed by Crisis Group. Crisis Group interview, security source, Pemba, February 2021.

<sup>58</sup> "U.S. energy company Anadarko says worker killed in Mozambique attack", Reuters, 22 February 2019.

<sup>59</sup> President Nyusi announced a few days later that Mozambican special forces had captured a militant base in Macomia district in response. See "Cabo Delgado: Special forces take militant bases, capture those inside – PR", *Club of Mozambique*, 9 April 2019.

<sup>60</sup> "Cyclone Kenneth: UN says Mozambique may need another huge aid effort", *The Guardian*, 26 April 2019.

<sup>61</sup> "Isis claims sub-Saharan attacks in a sign of African ambitions", *The Guardian*, 6 June 2019.

<sup>62</sup> "Cabo Delgado: Government forces kill 26 insurgents – AIM report", *Club of Mozambique*, 18 June 2019; "Seven killed in Mozambique jihadist attack claimed by IS", *eNCA*, 6 July 2019. See also "Cabo Delgado war continues", *AllAfrica*, 12 July 2019.

## B. Security Forces Turn to Military Contractors

Following battles between al-Shabab fighters and security forces in Macomia and Palma districts in July and August, militants started moving again into the Makonde heartland of Muidumbe district. Alarmed, authorities contracted the Russian Wagner Group to support operations through October, diverting the mercenaries from their original duties of providing security for the presidential election, which Nyusi won in a contested vote criticised by international observers and marked by a dip in his popularity in Cabo Delgado.<sup>63</sup> While killing several militants, the Russians sustained losses of their own and wound down operations.<sup>64</sup> For the rest of 2019, militants thus had more room to operate. They made incursions into Tanzania in November before stepping up raids again in Muidumbe district in December.<sup>65</sup> By the end of December, 85,000 civilians in Cabo Delgado had fled their homes.<sup>66</sup>

With the onset of 2020, the militants became better organised and equipped, forming at least three geographically separate attack groups, in the north, centre and south of Cabo Delgado.<sup>67</sup> They could now mount multiple operations in different areas on security services and state infrastructure. In late January, al-Shabab fighters first attacked Mbau in Mocímboa da Praia district, reportedly killing more than twenty soldiers. They then raided the town of Bilibiza, in Quissanga district, a few days later, vandalising government buildings including a health centre.<sup>68</sup> Thousands of people began fleeing southward amid sporadic cholera outbreaks.<sup>69</sup> Humanitarian and other sources report that during this time, al-Shabab fighters who came across civilians during the course of attacks began ordering people to vacate land or be killed.<sup>70</sup>

Militants then launched bold raids on district capitals as the COVID-19 pandemic arrived. In March, in the first attack against Mocímboa da Praia town, they battled security forces, overrunning a military base, before raising the ISIS flag and handing

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<sup>63</sup> Wagner is widely reported to be a Kremlin-backed company run by businessman Yevgeny Prigozhin. Security sources say Wagner was in Mozambique to handle presidential security around the October 2019 election but was instead drawn into taking on the insurrection. Crisis Group interview, private security source, Maputo, February 2021. The deployment came after Nyusi visited Russia between 20 and 24 August 2019. Details of Nyusi's trip to Russia were published in the September 2019 issue of the presidential newsletter, *O Presidente*. See also "Russian mercenaries pour into Africa and suffer more losses", Jamestown Foundation, 28 January 2020. The EU faulted Nyusi's 2019 election victory for Frelimo's use of state resources during its campaign. See "Missão de Observação Eleitoral da UE – Relatório Final: Moçambique Eleições Gerais e das Assembleias Provinciais 2019", European Union Election Observation Mission, 15 October 2019. Annex IV of the report shows that Cabo Delgado was the only province where Frelimo lost ground between 2014 and 2019. Nyusi took 75 per cent of all votes in Cabo Delgado, a slight decline from his numbers in the 2014 election. See the report by Centro de Integridade Pública, 15 October 2019, which shows that voting patterns swung from Frelimo toward Renamo in Cabo Delgado's coastal and southern districts.

<sup>64</sup> Crisis Group interviews, private security sources, near Cape Town, December 2020; Maputo, March 2021.

<sup>65</sup> "Six killed in Tanzania attack near border with Mozambique", AFP, 13 November 2019.

<sup>66</sup> Data from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix.

<sup>67</sup> Private security consultant report dated August 2020.

<sup>68</sup> Database of attack data produced by Mozambique-based diplomat, reviewed by Crisis Group.

<sup>69</sup> See also "Mozambique: Cholera in three Cabo Delgado districts", AllAfrica, 24 February 2020.

<sup>70</sup> Crisis Group interviews, community activists and field-based humanitarian workers, Pemba, February 2021.

out food to civilians applauding them.<sup>71</sup> The militants left town a day later, having kidnapped a large number of women and children. A separate group of fighters then attacked Quissanga town, destroying the police headquarters, burning the military barracks and beheading the statue of Eduardo Mondlane, Frelimo's founder.<sup>72</sup> In early April, al-Shabab also mounted sustained attacks on Muidumbe town, otherwise known as Namacande, decapitating or shooting dead dozens of nearby villagers before retreating from helicopter gunfire from the Dyck Advisory Group, a South African private military company brought in to support Mozambican forces.<sup>73</sup>

Maputo's decision to use the mercenaries arguably dented al-Shabab's momentum, but even when pushed onto the back foot, militants quickly regrouped.<sup>74</sup> A few days after their retreat from Muidumbe, they raided the island of Quirimba, in Ibo district, where they destroyed a school, a health centre and an administrator's residence. Security forces and Dyck men counterattacked in April and May, reportedly killing dozens of al-Shabab fighters.<sup>75</sup> Militants still managed to mount a bold attack on Macomia town, storming into the district capital carrying rocket-propelled grenades and wearing government army uniforms.<sup>76</sup> Humanitarian workers and many civilians abandoned the town.<sup>77</sup> Government security forces attacked al-Shabab positions days later and again in mid-June, with officials reporting dozens of militants killed.<sup>78</sup> The militants would, however, rebound again.

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<sup>71</sup> "Mozambique jihadists 'capture strategic port in major victory'", *Daily Maverick*, 24 March 2020. Crisis Group interview, source from Mocímbo da Praia, Pemba, February 2021.

<sup>72</sup> "Cabo Delgado: Homens armados atacam Quissanga", VOA, 26 March 2020. Database of attack data produced by Mozambique-based diplomat, reviewed by Crisis Group. For reference to the kidnappings, see "Caracterização e organização social dos Machababos", *Observador Rural*, 6 April 2021.

<sup>73</sup> Database of attack data produced by Mozambique-based diplomat, reviewed by Crisis Group. Crisis Group interview, counter-insurgency security source, Maputo, February 2021. The Dyck Advisory Group is run by Lionel Dyck, a former Rhodesian colonel who subsequently served at the same rank in the Zimbabwean Defence Force. He won accolades in Mozambique for leading the attack that captured Renamo's headquarters at Gorongosa in 1985. See "Islamist group kills 52 in 'cruel and diabolical' massacre", *The Guardian*, 22 April 2020, for details of the alleged killings in Xitaxi, near Muidumbe.

<sup>74</sup> Crisis Group interviews, security sources, Johannesburg, Maputo and Pemba, December 2020-March 2021.

<sup>75</sup> Database of attack data produced by Mozambique-based diplomat, reviewed by Crisis Group. During the operation, a Dyck helicopter had to make an emergency landing. See "South African chopper in Mozambique operation makes emergency landing", *SA People News*, 10 April 2020. Interior Minister Amade Miquidade claimed that security forces killed 50 militants during this period. See "Insurgência em Moçambique: Governo obrigado a adaptar estratégia e meios", Deutsche Welle, 15 May 2020.

<sup>76</sup> "Insurgents clash with govt forces following dawn raids in Macomia", *Zitamar News*, 28 May 2020.

<sup>77</sup> "MSF pulls out of Macomia and Mocímbo da Praia following attacks", *Zitamar News*, 5 June 2020.

<sup>78</sup> See "Mozambique: Armed forces responding 'firmly and courageously' – Nyusi", AllAfrica, 1 June 2020, for details of the late May attack on al-Shabab. Government attacks on al-Shabab positions took place on 14 and 20 June, according to a database of attack data produced by a Mozambique-based diplomat, reviewed by Crisis Group.

### C. *The Onset of an International Crisis*

In late June, al-Shabab fighters launched a multi-pronged raid on the port town of Mocímboa da Praia, attacking government and police buildings and killing civilians and security force personnel.<sup>79</sup> Days later, the joint government and mercenary force struck an al-Shabab base in Quissanga district, with officials claiming they killed a large number of al-Shabab fighters.<sup>80</sup> Still, the militants bounced back again. After a spree of raiding and looting in Macomia district, they made another assault on Mocímboa da Praia town, driving out security forces and almost the entire population in more than a week of fighting in early August that left dozens dead.<sup>81</sup> By the end of the month, the total number of displaced people had risen to 330,000.<sup>82</sup>

Regional capitals and oil and gas multinationals began to fear that the situation was getting out of hand. In August, during the assault on Mocímboa da Praia, neighbouring Tanzania had announced that it would step up border security operations. The French oil and gas multinational Total, which had purchased Anadarko's assets in Africa in 2019, pressed the government to enter into a new memorandum of understanding that obliged the government to reinforce its security force presence around the Afungi perimeter.<sup>83</sup> The company's chief executive officer, Patrick Pouyanné, travelled to Maputo to meet Nyusi, to whom he relayed that the risk posed to the company's multi-billion-dollar operational plan was becoming critical.<sup>84</sup> Still, the militants continued to sustain the momentum. Weeks later, in October, a group of al-Shabab fighters numbering as many as 300 crossed into Tanzania and raided security, reportedly capturing military equipment in an attack again celebrated by ISIS.<sup>85</sup>

The conflict started to draw world leaders' attention and prompted Total to start reducing its operational footprint. In late October, Dyck helicopters struck two boats carrying militants off the coast of Ibo district.<sup>86</sup> Days later, security forces struck militants again, this time in Palma district.<sup>87</sup> At the same time, al-Shabab massacred up to

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<sup>79</sup> See "Top officer killed in insurgent attack in Mocímboa da Praia", *Zitamar News*, 29 June 2020.

<sup>80</sup> Government officials claimed that security forces killed more than 100 militants in these attacks, although many analysts dispute this claim. See "Mozambique forces in disputed attack on insurgent base", *Zitamar News*, 2 July 2020.

<sup>81</sup> For a blow-by-blow account of the attack, see "Cabo Ligado Weekly: 10-16 August", *Zitamar News*, 19 August 2020. ISIS claimed that two Mozambican army barracks were attacked, 50 soldiers killed and quantities of government weapons taken.

<sup>82</sup> Data from the International Organization for Migration Displacement Tracking Matrix. 306,000 civilians were displaced in Cabo Delgado, with the rest within neighbouring provinces.

<sup>83</sup> "Total signs new MoU with Mozambique government for LNG project security", *Zitamar News*, 24 August 2020. Under the memorandum, Mozambique provided up to 1,000 security personnel as part of a Joint Task Force with a defensive, rather than offensive mandate. Crisis Group telephone interview, Total representative, March 2021. See also "TPDF to launch manhunt along the border with Mozambique", *The Citizen*, 11 August 2020.

<sup>84</sup> Security sources say the encounter between Pouyanné and Nyusi was tense, with the Total CEO suggesting that the company would have to withdraw if the government could not guarantee security. Crisis Group interviews, security sources, Maputo, March 2021.

<sup>85</sup> "Militants from Mozambique staged deadly attack in Tanzania, police say", Reuters, 23 October 2020.

<sup>86</sup> For details of the strike on the boats, see "Cabo Ligado Weekly: 19-25 October 2020".

<sup>87</sup> "Mozambique: Dozens of terrorists killed in Punhandar", AllAfrica, 6 November 2009.

50 civilians in Muidumbe district before eventually storming Namacande.<sup>88</sup> UN Secretary-General António Guterres and French President Emmanuel Macron strongly condemned the killings.<sup>89</sup> The then-outgoing U.S. coordinator for counter-terrorism, Nathan Sales, visited Maputo, where he insisted to journalists that the militants were part of a “committed ISIS affiliate that embraces the ISIS ideology”.<sup>90</sup> In December, al-Shabab fighters attacked security forces close to Afungi. Although these strikes did not target Total, they still prompted the multinational to withdraw non-essential and non-security personnel the following month and press the government to provide more troops to secure the Afungi perimeter.<sup>91</sup>

After security forces and Dyck hit a militant base in Mocímboa da Praia district in February 2021, many in the private security industry speculated that the militants would struggle to recover.<sup>92</sup> But the militants geared up operations in the north, drawing from their bases on the Tanzanian border. They began raiding the environs north of Palma town. The raids sent waves of terror through the civilian population, thousands of whom fled the district as food supplies reached critically low levels due to lack of secure road access.<sup>93</sup>

On 24 March, militants numbering around 120 and heavily armed with machine guns and grenade launchers attacked Palma town, destroying government buildings, robbing a bank, raiding arsenals and forcing tens of thousands of people to flee. As fighting with security forces spilled into a second day, a second group of attackers moved in from the north.<sup>94</sup> They razed large parts of the town, killing civilians, and ambushed a convoy including expatriate contractors who were trying to flee.<sup>95</sup> Rescue operations shipped thousands of civilians by boat to Pemba, as security forces battled the militants. On 27 March, Total announced it was halting operations.<sup>96</sup> ISIS then celebrated the attack on its media channel.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> See “Militant Islamists ‘behead more than 50’ in Mozambique”, BBC, 9 November 2020. Many people were indeed killed, though accounts vary as to how many were actually beheaded. Crisis Group interviews, humanitarian workers, Maputo and Pemba, February-March 2021.

<sup>89</sup> See also “Press Release of the UN Secretary General”, 10 November 2020; and “Macron calls for global response after the jihadist massacre in Mozambique”, Pan African Visions, 12 November 2020.

<sup>90</sup> Press briefing with Ambassador-at-Large Nathan Sales, U.S. coordinator for counter-terrorism, U.S. Department of State, 8 December 2020.

<sup>91</sup> Crisis Group telephone interview, Total representative, March 2021

<sup>92</sup> Crisis Group interviews, private security analysts, Maputo, February 2021. Crisis Group telephone interviews, regional intelligence analysts, February 2021.

<sup>93</sup> Crisis Group interviews, security sources, Maputo and Pemba, February-March 2021.

<sup>94</sup> Crisis Group reviews of two separate private security reports, April 2021.

<sup>95</sup> In a panic, some of the hotel guests crammed into seventeen vehicles to make a dash for the beach, where they hoped to embark on boats evacuating people to Pemba. They were ambushed on their way off the hotel grounds. Some were killed, amid reports that militants had also targeted other foreigners. A civilian who fled Palma for Pemba after the attacks said he had seen 87 dead civilians – 80 Mozambicans and seven he believed to be foreigners. See “Cabo Ligado Weekly: 5-11 April”, *Zitamar News*, 13 April 2021. See also “Twelve people, possibly foreigners, beheaded in Mozambique attack – police,” Reuters, 8 April 2021.

<sup>96</sup> Information gathered by Crisis Group over several days from numerous government and private security sources, eyewitnesses and security reports, as the situation unfolded.

<sup>97</sup> The ISIS claim was later disputed as its footage of al-Shabab fighters was taken in a location other than Palma. See Joseph Hanlon, “IS Palma claims are fake news”, *Mozambique: News Reports and Clippings* (blog), 31 March 2021.

In the days ahead, government forces continued to fight militants, amid sporadic attacks on security forces around the perimeter of Afungi. Authorities declared they had taken back control of Palma on 4 April. By then, however, Total had decided to withdraw all its staff from Afungi.<sup>98</sup> On 26 April, the company invoked *force majeure*, saying it would no longer be able to guarantee its contractual obligations to the state.<sup>99</sup> By the end of the month, the total number of displaced people from Cabo Delgado had risen to 732,000.<sup>100</sup>

Since late April 2021, al-Shabab's activity has been relatively muted while government and allied forces put them under pressure in continued cat-and-mouse operations. Militants continued to raid neighbourhoods of Palma, forcing civilians to flee during the course of early May, before moving their attention south and west toward Muidumbe, Mueda and Nangade districts where they once again began to mount attacks. Government forces, however, have been able to take back some strategic locations, notably Diaca, an important gateway to Mocímboa da Praia, as well as Namacande, which had been dominated by militants since November 2020.<sup>101</sup> They have also attacked militant positions in Macomia district.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> "Total withdraws completely from Afungi, leaving LNG site in government hands," *Zitamar News*, 2 April 2021.

<sup>99</sup> "Total Declares *Force Majeure* on Mozambique LNG Project", press release, Total, 26 April 2021.

<sup>100</sup> Data provided by the International Organization for Migration Displacement Tracking Matrix. The IOM estimated that at the end of April 2021, 662,828 civilians were displaced in Cabo Delgado, while an additional 69,399 had fled to neighbouring provinces.

<sup>101</sup> Crisis Group interviews, private security sources, May 2021. See "Cabo Ligado Weekly: 10-23 May 2021", 26 May 2021.

<sup>102</sup> "Cabo Ligado Weekly: 31 May-6 June 2021", 8 June 2021.

#### IV. Al-Shabab's Evolving Shape, Strength and Behaviour

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Cabo Delgado's al-Shabab is a composite movement. Lower-level militants are mostly Mozambicans, primarily young Mwani and Makua who tend to be former fishermen and farmers, coastal smugglers and traders, or unemployed youth.<sup>103</sup> There are a small number of Makonde al-Shabab fighters, for example some who were swept out of ruby mines in 2017.<sup>104</sup> But the leadership of the movement is different. While there are a number of known Mozambican leaders of al-Shabab, eyewitnesses and Mozambican officials say Tanzanian Islamists, many of whom fled into Mozambique after security crackdowns in their home country in recent years, represent an important part of the group's leadership.<sup>105</sup> These men appear to be more ideological than the Mozambican rank and file, many of whom are abducted and forced to sign up, or who join al-Shabab out of frustration with their socio-economic status, lured in by recruiters either offering cash or promising future wealth, and staying loyal to the group so long as they are paid.<sup>106</sup>

The movement seems to be growing in strength even after sustaining many casualties. It has reoccupied some of the main bases previously attacked by security forces. Independent security sources say the group comprises up to 1,500 fighters, but some

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<sup>103</sup> Crisis Group interview, Mozambican intelligence source, Pemba, February 2021. Crisis Group interviews, eyewitnesses and victims of militant attacks, Metuge, February 2021. In December 2020, President Nyusi said in his state of the nation speech that "most of the recruits are Mozambicans". Crisis Group review of English translation of state of the nation speech provided by diplomat in Maputo. See also "Mozambique police name 'ringleaders' behind Islamist threat", Reuters, 13 August 2018, for references to names of leaders identified by the Mozambican authorities as far back as 2018.

<sup>104</sup> Crisis Group interview, former miner, Pemba, February 2021.

<sup>105</sup> In 2020, Mozambican journalists named two al-Shabab leaders as Bonomado Machude Omar and Abdala Likonga. See "Bonomado Machude Omar ou Ibn Omar: The Mozambican face of terrorism in Cabo Delgado", Centro de Jornalismo Investigativo, 22 September 2020; and "Lifting the fog reveals ringleaders behind Cabo Delgado terrorism", Centro de Jornalismo Investigativo, 29 September 2020. In his state of the nation speech, President Nyusi also singled out several Tanzanians in al-Shabab's leadership. Eyewitnesses have corroborated some of this information. See "Caracterização e organização social dos Machababos", op. cit. Crisis Group interviews, Tanzanian source close to jihadist circles, May 2021; survivors of militant attacks, Metuge, February 2021. Survivors described hearing orders being given in Tanzanian Swahili during one attack.

<sup>106</sup> Two former al-Shabab fighters from Nampula said they were lured into the group by promises of money in November 2020. They said they left the following February because they did not receive payments promised to them. Crisis Group review of transcripts provided by local Mozambican community researcher. See also "Ataques Terroristas em Cabo Delgado (2017-2021): as causas do fenómeno pelo boca da população de Mocímboa da Praia", Universidade Rovuma, 2021, for civilian testimonies on how Mozambican recruits to al-Shabab are lured by money. A Mozambican intelligence source in contact with militants also described the Tanzanians as "jihadists who will stay for a long time" and the Mozambicans as "just aggrieved that all the land and wealth has gone to Frelimo". Crisis Group interview, Pemba, February 2021. See "Caracterização e organização social dos Machababos", op. cit., a study based on interviews with 23 women who were once al-Shabab captives. The study concluded that Mozambican militants became frustrated and considered deserting when their payments were delayed. Religious leaders do not believe that the Mozambicans are ideologues. "They are materialists, not religious", said one Muslim religious leader. Crisis Group interview, Pemba, February 2021. A Christian leader also said: "It's money they want". See "Priest insists insurgency in Mozambique is based on economics, not religion", *Club of Mozambique*, 20 April 2020.

government officials think there could be as many as 4,000 members, including in non-combatant roles.<sup>107</sup> Eyewitnesses describe the group's logistical crew, which include local mechanics, nurses and communications specialists.<sup>108</sup> The group recruits those it can entice with money, or the promise of it, as well as by kidnapping men in raids.<sup>109</sup> Ever more evidence suggests that al-Shabab cells are recruiting in neighbouring Niassa province to the west and Nampula and Zambezia provinces to the south.<sup>110</sup> When attacking major population centres, the group is thus now able to amass relatively large units. Hundreds of fighters were involved in the August 2020 battle in Mocímboa da Praia town and in the March 2021 attack on Palma town, for example.<sup>111</sup>

Since 2017, the group's weaponry and operational tactics have also improved significantly. According to a range of security sources, militants have significantly built up their armouries, including from stockpiles they have grabbed directly from government armouries.<sup>112</sup> Dependent at first on AK-47 rifles and the occasional PKM machine gun, they have now acquired racks of RPG-7 rocket launchers and several 60mm and 82mm mortar firing systems, as well as the occasional government vehicle, mostly from looting security forces.<sup>113</sup> On land, the fighters have become adept at co-ordinating simultaneous attacks in different districts and have got markedly better at battlefield tactics. In addition, they are mobile in littoral waters, using small canoes and sailboats to move up and down the coast or to mount attacks on shore or nearby islands.<sup>114</sup>

They also appear to have built up an effective intelligence system. Security sources report that the militants have developed cells not just among the civilian population but also within armed force units.<sup>115</sup> They have caught security forces flatfooted in ambushes and prepared raids on military bases from nearby hidden locations as well

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<sup>107</sup> Crisis Group interviews, counter-insurgency sources, private security analysts and government officials, December to March 2021.

<sup>108</sup> "Caracterização e organização social dos Machababos", op. cit.

<sup>109</sup> Private security company briefing, August 2020. See also "Historian warns of 'terrible situation' of missing women in Cabo Delgado conflict", *Lusa*, 2 September 2020.

<sup>110</sup> Crisis Group interview, government security official, Maputo, March 2021. Crisis Group interviews, survivors of attacks in Quissanga district, February 2021. All survivors recounted that many attackers spoke a local Nampula dialect. See also Salvador Forquilha and João Pereira, "After all, it is not just Cabo Delgado! Insurgency dynamics in Nampula and Niassa", *IESE Boletim*, 11 March 2021. Nyusi also mentioned Zambezia as a recruiting ground in his December 2020 state of the nation address.

<sup>111</sup> Estimates given by security and counter-insurgency sources, August 2020 and April 2021.

<sup>112</sup> Crisis Group interviews, counter-insurgency sources and private security analysts, December 2020-March 2021.

<sup>113</sup> Confidential private security briefing, August 2020. Crisis Group interviews, private security sources, December 2020-March 2021. Crisis Group review of videos and pictures of militants with weapons stockpiles.

<sup>114</sup> Crisis Group telephone interview, private security source, March 2021. See also "Cabo Delgado insurgents kill again in attack on coastal Macomia", *Zitamar News*, 30 March 2021. During the attack on Palma, militants hijacked a multi-purpose vessel from its mooring near Afungi. Crisis Group telephone interviews and correspondence, maritime and other security sources, April 2021.

<sup>115</sup> Crisis Group interviews, security experts and counter-insurgency sources, December 2020-March 2021.



as infiltrated towns before launching attacks, as they did in Palma. Fighters often attack areas soon after security forces depart, suggesting that they have advance knowledge of their foes' movements. When they attack, they sometimes wear security force uniforms, obtained illegally, confusing civilians and soldiers who are unable to tell whether they are in fact al-Shabab until it is too late.<sup>116</sup> The group has also attracted defectors from the security forces. One Mozambican source told Crisis Group that former security force personnel he hires for his security company say they know out-of-work former colleagues who have joined al-Shabab.<sup>117</sup>

The militants also appear able to generate considerable revenue and deploy funds to expand their operational footprint and recruitment base. Some businesses in Cabo Delgado pay protection money; other enterprises have been started up through cash loans from militants, who then tax profits.<sup>118</sup> Militants also raise revenues from ransom payments.<sup>119</sup> Intelligence sources suspect significant funds may be channelled in from abroad.<sup>120</sup> The funds of al-Shabab are hard to trace, however. The movement often uses civilians to launder money, including via mobile phone transfer services. Eyewitnesses, however, have seen militants handle large amounts of Mozambican meticaís and foreign currency.<sup>121</sup> Some experts fear that the movement could start taking a slice of contraband profits, including via bankrolling networks of gold and gemstone miners and smugglers operating in the province.<sup>122</sup> There are fears militants may also start taxing drug cargoes in transit through waters and coastal land under their control, although there is no visible evidence to suggest that is happening yet.<sup>123</sup>

While invoking Islam, and presenting themselves as jihadists, the militants seem to have specific local motives for killing. They sometimes stress their hatred for the ruling party and target specific local administrative and security officials, or those they consider government collaborators.<sup>124</sup> In one video, reportedly of the Quissanga town attack, militants wave an ISIS banner, but also make clear that they are reject-

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<sup>116</sup> Confidential private security briefing note dated August 2020.

<sup>117</sup> Crisis Group interview, owner of private security company, Maputo, March 2021.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Crisis Group telephone interview, private security source, May 2021.

<sup>120</sup> Crisis Group interview, private security source, Maputo, March 2021.

<sup>121</sup> Crisis Group interviews, security sources in South Africa and Mozambique, December 2020-March 2021. Crisis Group review of confidential study published in January 2021 based on testimony of several groups of internally displaced people. Eyewitnesses claim they have seen al-Shabab fighters being paid the equivalent of \$2,000 for their role in combat operations. See "Houve aumento salarial por combate no seio de insurgentes", *Pinnacle News*, 13 May 2021.

<sup>122</sup> See Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime, "Are Mozambique's insurgents closing in on illicit trafficking profits?", *Daily Maverick*, 8 May 2020.

<sup>123</sup> Illicit narcotics come to Cabo Delgado from the Makran coast of Iran and Pakistan. See "Heavy traffic: The increasing movement of drugs to East Africa", *Jane's Intelligence Review*, April 2014. Today, most of the drugs coming into Mozambique are either heroin or methamphetamines. Mwani fishermen and smugglers allied with al-Shabab offload the drugs from oceangoing wooden dhows onto their land-bound skiffs. Counter-narcotics sources say the conflict has driven many drug deliveries either up the coast into Tanzania or down the coast south of Cabo Delgado, although quantities are still getting through in the province itself. Crisis Group interviews, counter-narcotics sources, Cape Town and Maputo, February and March 2021.

<sup>124</sup> Crisis Group interview, human rights researcher, May 2021.

ing the Frelimo flag.<sup>125</sup> A Mozambican militant in another video says they are fighting “leeches and corrupt people” from “Maputo”.<sup>126</sup> One eyewitness told Crisis Group that when al-Shabab fighters stormed Mocimboa da Praia in August 2020, they killed only civilians who presented government-issued or Frelimo identification cards, sparing others who carried no official documents.<sup>127</sup>

The relationship between al-Shabab and civilians is fraught. The militant group behaves like a roving predator, often seemingly appearing out of nowhere to conduct indiscriminate attacks before vanishing again. In the process of targeting security forces and government buildings, its fighters have inflicted terrible casualties on locals, often mutilating and decapitating them.<sup>128</sup> Militant attacks on the Makonde, who are mainly Frelimo supporters and Catholics, are reportedly often severe.<sup>129</sup> Mwani and Makua civilians, however, have also borne the brunt of terrible attacks, for example during al-Shabab’s gradual sweep through the coastal districts in 2018, or in the group’s assaults on various district capitals. During these attacks, militants often explicitly order civilians to leave their homes and never come back. They kill those they believe are resisting the orders.<sup>130</sup> As a result, vast areas in some of the conflict-affected districts of Cabo Delgado are now significantly depopulated.<sup>131</sup>

That said, militants can, from time to time, show mercy, providing residents occasional food handouts and even safe passages out of the line of fire, and frequently telling civilians whom they come across that their real enemy is the state and not the population.<sup>132</sup> Despite the group’s elusive nature and its tendency to force many civilians to flee districts in which it operates, al-Shabab recruiters still maintain contacts with communities that chose to remain in the conflict-affected areas, and also among civilians and in displacement camps much farther afield.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Video of al-Shabab militants claiming to be in Quissanga, reviewed by Crisis Group.

<sup>126</sup> See Thomas Heyen-Dubé and Richard Rands, “A Salafi-Jihadi Insurgency in Cabo Delgado?”, University of Oxford, 2021, p. 26.

<sup>127</sup> Crisis Group interview, witness of August attack, Metuge, February 2021.

<sup>128</sup> Crisis Group interviews, civilian victims of al-Shabab attacks, Metuge, February 2021.

<sup>129</sup> Crisis Group interviews, humanitarian workers, Maputo and Pemba, February 2021.

<sup>130</sup> Several humanitarian workers, eyewitnesses and local researchers have described to Crisis Group situations where militants, while killing some civilians, have ordered others to simply leave the land.

<sup>131</sup> Crisis Group interviews, humanitarian workers, security and government sources, Maputo and Pemba, February-March 2021.

<sup>132</sup> Crisis Group interviews, humanitarian workers, Maputo and Pemba, February 2021. In some cases, militants have even given civilians money for transport to flee. Mozambican human rights researcher in call with Cabo Delgado expert group, May 2021. Crisis Group review of confidential testimony of individual released from al-Shabab captivity.

<sup>133</sup> Mozambican human rights researcher in call with Cabo Delgado expert group, May 2021. Crisis Group interviews, intelligence source, Pemba, February 2021; civil society leader, Pemba, February 2021. Confidential private security briefing, August 2020. See also “Caracterização e organização social dos Machababos”, op. cit.; and “Identifying Resiliencies in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique”, op. cit.

## V. Transnational Links and the Threat to the Region

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As the al-Shabab group in Cabo Delgado has grown, Mozambican and foreign security officials have become increasingly concerned that it could draw in more fighters from overseas, and also become a platform from which ISIS or other foreign militants could embed themselves and sow more insecurity in the region. While the link between Tanzanian jihadists and Mozambican militants is well established, the extent of other reported relationships between al-Shabab and other regional networks, including ISIS, is less clear. That said, Mozambique is right to be concerned about the possibility of transnational support for al-Shabab.

The conflict in Cabo Delgado has already been significantly affected by the proliferation of jihadist networks in Tanzania. Over the last decade, Islamist militants in Mozambique's neighbour have come into confrontation with security forces there.<sup>134</sup> In 2013, Tanzanian authorities dismantled a training camp which was linked to Somalia's Al-Shabaab movement and located near the northern city of Tanga. In 2015, security forces began cracking down on Islamist youth in the Kibiti district, 140km by road south of Dar es Salaam.<sup>135</sup> The youth fought back in 2017, targeting public and security officials in the district only to be met with heavy security crackdowns, accompanied by hundreds of reported disappearances. Many of these youth fled to Mozambique, where they eventually joined al-Shabab, including as leaders of the group.<sup>136</sup> Some of these individuals are connected to gem traders and maritime traffickers who have worked for smuggling rings still operating today between Tanzania and Mozambique, and which have also been previously used to move recruits from Tanzania to Somalia.<sup>137</sup>

Mozambican officials claim that some al-Shabab militants have also gone to fight alongside the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a Ugandan militant group that has been involved in killing thousands of civilians and attacking security forces in the

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<sup>134</sup> See "Tanzania: Extremism and Terrorism", Counter Extremism Project, n.d.; and André LeSage, "The Rising Terrorist Threat in Tanzania: Domestic Islamist Militancy and Regional Threats", Institute for National Strategic Studies, September 2014.

<sup>135</sup> For background on this incident, and more on militant activity in Tanzania, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°265, *Al-Shabaab Five Years after Westgate: Still a Menace in East Africa*, 21 September 2018, Section V.

<sup>136</sup> Crisis Group telephone interviews, regional intelligence source and East African academic following these developments, April 2021; Tanzanian source close to jihadist circles, May 2021. See also "Magafuli's Reign and Tanzania's Creeping Radicalization Issue", Jamestown Foundation, 28 January 2020.

<sup>137</sup> Previous research by UN investigators working on Somalia had already identified groups in Tanga that were close to a religious charity, the Ansar Muslim Youth Council, which runs a network of madrasas. No one suggests that the charity itself is involved in sponsoring acts of violence now, but in the early 2010s the Council's madrasas were a hotbed for disciples of the Kenyan cleric Aboud Rogo, who had links to Al-Shabaab in Somalia. Investigators found connections between members of these groups and criminals smuggling recruits for Al-Shabaab in Somalia and moving drugs shipments in Tanzanian and Mozambican shallow waters. See "Somalia Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea Submitted in Accordance with Resolution 2002 (2011)", UN S/2012/544, 13 July 2012. Some of these networks are still in business today. Crisis Group telephone interview, former drug trafficker in Tanzania, March 2021. Crisis Group interview, counter-trafficking source, Maputo, February 2021.

eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). They also say several Ugandans and Congolese have come to fight in Mozambique, travelling via Tanzania, though they offer no precise numbers or any explanation about why these exchanges, which appear to have taken place mostly between 2016 and 2018, might be valuable for either the ADF or al-Shabab in Cabo Delgado.<sup>138</sup>

Information collected outside Mozambique only partially corroborates some of their allegations. A former ADF fighter whose testimony while in custody has been reviewed by Crisis Group says ADF leader Musa Baluku has long been in contact with al-Shabab leaders in Mozambique.<sup>139</sup> In addition, the former fighter stated that in 2017, a militant Ugandan cleric now in Mozambican custody was involved in recruiting Mozambicans to join the ADF, moving them from Cabo Delgado through Tanzania and Burundi, after which they crossed into the DRC's South Kivu province and headed to the ADF's base in North Kivu.<sup>140</sup> In 2018, a group of Mozambicans arrested in the DRC claimed to the media that they were on the way to join "jihad" and had also travelled via Burundi.<sup>141</sup>

Whether recruits are still moving between the eastern DRC and Mozambique is unclear. While Congolese military sources say they suspect more Mozambicans have been training with the ADF in previous years, they cannot confirm the precise numbers in the ADF's ranks at present, and say they have no other Mozambicans in custody.<sup>142</sup> Regional security sources therefore believe that even if there was a significant movement of recruits between the DRC and Mozambique, it has now wound up.<sup>143</sup> That said, an organisation working with the Congolese military says it has identified at least one Tanzanian currently in the ADF who has fighting experience in Cabo Delgado. It is investigating the possibility that other Tanzanian jihadists are rotating through eastern Congo and Mozambique.<sup>144</sup>

In addition to these links, Mozambican and foreign security officials are also concerned about Somali jihadists who may also be getting involved with al-Shabab. UN investigators have reported to the Security Council that a senior figure from an ISIS-

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<sup>138</sup> Crisis Group interviews, interior ministry official, Maputo, March 2021. Nyusi also mentioned in his December 2020 state of the nation speech that a number of Congolese and Ugandans have joined al-Shabab's ranks in Cabo Delgado.

<sup>139</sup> Crisis Group review of defector testimony; and Crisis Group telephone interview, source who interviewed the defector, April 2021. The Ugandan cleric in detention is Abdul Rahman Faisal, who was linked to the Usafi mosque in Kampala, where he is reported to have been a focal point for ADF factions. See "Uganda police want Usafi mosque imam, five others extradited from Mozambique", *Club of Mozambique*, 30 January 2019.

<sup>140</sup> Crisis Group review of defector testimony; and Crisis Group telephone interview, source who interviewed the defector, April 2021. Crisis Group has also seen the documented testimonies of four other Mozambicans arrested by the DRC's military taking the same migratory route via Tanzania and Burundi to eastern Congo. All four say they travelled this route in late 2016 and 2017, although they deny being part of any armed group. Crisis Group review of documented testimonies; and Crisis Group telephone interview, source who interviewed the four detainees, February 2021. The four detainees comprised three Makua and one Mwani.

<sup>141</sup> See "Watch: Men trained in DR Congo to destabilise are captured – Mocímboa da Praia", *Club of Mozambique*, 22 March 2018.

<sup>142</sup> Crisis Group telephone interview, DRC military intelligence source, April 2021.

<sup>143</sup> Crisis Group interview, regional intelligence source, Nairobi, April 2021.

<sup>144</sup> Crisis Group WhatsApp interview, source working with DRC authorities, April 2021.

affiliated splinter of Somalia's Al-Shabaab movement operating in the north of that country's semi-autonomous region of Puntland has travelled to Mozambique. The team reported in September 2020 that Mohamed Ahmed "Qahiye", known by regional intelligence sources in East Africa as a military trainer, had passed through Ethiopia on his way to Cabo Delgado.<sup>145</sup> While the UN investigators did not provide further details, regional intelligence and diplomatic sources suspect that Qahiye went to train fighters in Mozambique.<sup>146</sup>

Meanwhile, fighters of several other nationalities are known to be embedded in Cabo Delgado's militant ranks. Eyewitnesses who have escaped or been released from militant bases in Cabo Delgado report seeing other foreigners in camp, including fighters with fair skin, and in one case, blue eyes.<sup>147</sup> Security sources are divided over whether these men could be from Arabic-speaking countries or from the Caucasus, but establishing who and how numerous they are has not been possible. South African law enforcement officers say they are pursuing several leads relating to South African nationals, and other Africans passing through South Africa, who may have established links with al-Shabab in Cabo Delgado.<sup>148</sup>

Counter-terrorism experts and policymakers claim that it is through these foreign links that ISIS is most likely to exert influence. The UN team monitoring the global evolution of ISIS and al-Qaeda reported in 2020 that the Puntland ISIS-affiliated group acts as an important logistical lead for support directed to both the ADF and al-Shabab in Cabo Delgado.<sup>149</sup> The U.S. State Department which has now classified al-Shabab in Cabo Delgado and the ADF as ISIS-affiliated groups, has meanwhile named the leader of what it calls "ISIS-Mozambique" as a Tanzanian national, Abu Yasir Hassan.<sup>150</sup> He is known to have been involved in the Kibiti violence and is also suspected to have spent time in the DRC, although some security sources suggest he may be dead.<sup>151</sup> But while ISIS now claims joint ownership of the ADF faction run by

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<sup>145</sup> "Report of the UN Panel of Experts on Somalia", S/2020/949, 28 September 2020. Crisis Group interviews, Kenyan and Ethiopian intelligence sources, Nairobi, November 2020.

<sup>146</sup> Crisis Group interviews, regional intelligence sources, Nairobi, April 2021. Those sources point to this Puntland ISIS affiliate's role in trafficking weapons between Yemen and Puntland on the same oceangoing dhows plying the waters down the East African coast as a reason to suspect that it could have a role in logistical support for militants in Cabo Delgado. See Annexes 1.7, 3.1 and 6.1 of the "Somalia Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea Submitted in Accordance with Resolution 2060 (2012)", S/2013/413, 12 July 2013. See also "Snapping Back Against Iran: The Case of the Al Bari 2 and the UN Arms Embargo", Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime, December 2020.

<sup>147</sup> Crisis Group interviews, security sources who have debriefed civilians released from militant camps, December 2020 and March 2021. Crisis Group interview, person in contact with militant cells in South Africa, Pretoria, February 2021.

<sup>148</sup> Crisis Group interviews, South African criminal intelligence investigator, Pretoria, December 2020 and February 2021.

<sup>149</sup> See the 25th (S/2020/53) and 27th (S/2021/68) reports of the Analytical and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to Resolution 2368 (2017) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities.

<sup>150</sup> "State Department Terrorist Designations of ISIS Affiliates and Leaders in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Mozambique", media note, U.S. State Department, 10 March 2021.

<sup>151</sup> Some security sources in Tanzania say Hassan may be dead. Crisis Group telephone interview, Tanzania-based contact in touch with security services, March 2021.

Baluku as well as the al-Shabab of Mozambique, under the banner of Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP), the U.S. State Department considers the DRC and Mozambican franchises “distinct entities”.<sup>152</sup>

If there is a relationship between ISIS and al-Shabab, it appears to be more tenuous than official accounts suggest. Crisis Group research elsewhere shows that ISIS tends to exploit pre-existing conflicts and mostly provides only limited resources to strengthen the performance of allied factions on the ground, but that these affiliates retain their own command and control and local priorities.<sup>153</sup> An important indicator of the strength of any link between ISIS and any given affiliate is the speed and accuracy with which ISIS issues media releases glorifying the attacks of the affiliate. Rapid press releases would indicate smooth communication between the groups. In the case of Cabo Delgado, the link appears to be weak. While ISIS has claimed or commented on over 40 separate attacks by al-Shabab between June 2019 and the present, it stopped claiming them at the end of October 2020, resuming only in the aftermath of the Palma attack in March. By contrast, ISIS claims of ADF attacks continued throughout this period.<sup>154</sup>

Regional governments are nonetheless understandably concerned that the longer the conflict rages in Cabo Delgado, the more likely it is that southern Africa becomes a new frontier for jihadist attacks.<sup>155</sup> In January 2020, South Africa's Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor stated: “We should be worried, given that the attacks in Mozambique point to the presence of IS in the ... region”.<sup>156</sup> South African intelligence and law enforcement officials are also amassing evidence that while homegrown criminal gangs and jihadists in cities like Durban and Johannesburg are mingling with suspected jihadists coming from Tanzania and ADF operatives coming from as far away as the eastern DRC, South African nationals connected to these militant circles have also attempted to travel to Mozambique for combat experience.<sup>157</sup> Authorities are also investigating several suspected ISIS-affiliated money launderers allegedly operating in South Africa.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> See “Understanding the New U.S. Terrorism Designations in Africa”, op. cit. For a timeline of ISCAP's involvement in the DRC, see “The Islamic State in Congo”, George Washington Program on Extremism, October 2020.

<sup>153</sup> See Crisis Group Special Report N°1, *Exploiting Disorder: al-Qaeda and the Islamic State*, 14 January 2016. See also Vincent Foucher, “The Islamic State Franchises in Africa: Lessons from Lake Chad”, Crisis Group Commentary, 29 October 2020.

<sup>154</sup> Information of ISIS claims in Mozambique tabulated by EXTRAC, a conflict tracking system, and compared to database of ISIS claims in the DRC managed by the Bridgeway Foundation.

<sup>155</sup> A confidential South African intelligence report obtained by Crisis Group states that “there are concerns that South Africa is being used as a base and safe haven for logistics and planning by terrorist groups”.

<sup>156</sup> “Welcome Remarks by Minister of International Relations and Commerce, Dr. Naledi Pandor, at the DIRCO-hosted Africa Heads of Mission Conference”, Pretoria, 28 January 2020.

<sup>157</sup> Crisis Group interview, South African criminal intelligence officer, February 2021.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid. See also “Islamic State's South African Fighters in Mozambique: The Thulsie Twins Case”, Jamestown Foundation, 5 November 2020.

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## VI. Government and Regional Responses

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### A. *The Role of the Police and Military*

Mozambique's military, stunted by decades of under-investment, has faced serious challenges when countering al-Shabab and has become a near constant target for militant attacks. The army is also stretched given its responsibilities in trying to achieve the surrender of a dissident residual armed faction of Renamo in the centre of the country.<sup>159</sup> A special rapid reaction unit of the national police, the Unidade Intervenção Rápida (UIR), supported for several months by Dyck mercenaries until they recently wound down their operation, has served until recently as the primary force taking the fight to al-Shabab.<sup>160</sup>

Mozambique's national military, Forças Armadas de Defesa de Moçambique (FADM), is in a parlous state after decades of under-investment following the 1992 peace accords that ended the country's civil war. Much of the FADM's Soviet-era stock is in disrepair.<sup>161</sup> Originally slated to be a force of 30,000 men, split 50:50 between government and Renamo appointees, the FADM fell way short in its recruitment efforts, leaving it with just over 12,000 members by 1995, just 30 per cent of them Renamo.<sup>162</sup> Under foreign pressure to prioritise development and loath to trust an institution composed partly of its former battlefield enemies, Maputo continued to slow-roll military spending over the next decades.<sup>163</sup> A government procurement scandal during Guebuza's term as president and Nyusi's as defence minister, in which state-backed companies took on more than \$2 billion in questionable debt guaranteed by the state to finance the purchase of maritime assets, also rendered the country bankrupt and without a navy fit for purpose.<sup>164</sup>

The UIR has fared differently, however. Spending on the UIR was privileged during and after the Guebuza presidency. This force is better paid and equipped than the FADM and other police units, which also generally suffer from under-investment.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Mirko Manzoni, personal envoy of the UN Secretary General to Mozambique, states: "to complete the implementation of the peace agreement, the last Renamo rebels ... must be disarmed and demobilized. The Mozambican army cannot therefore mobilize all its forces to put an end to the conflict that is developing in the north of the country". See "Un Suisse au chevet d'un Mozambique en crise", *SwissInfo*, 27 May 2021.

<sup>160</sup> Dyck's contract was due for renewal in April 2021, but it did not come through.

<sup>161</sup> Crisis Group interview, military figure who has inspected FADM stockpiles, March 2021.

<sup>162</sup> By 1995, the FADM comprised 12,195 members, with 8,533 former government soldiers and 3,662 from Renamo. Part of the reason for the low numbers was that Renamo could not mobilise enough of its own base to participate in integration. See Anicia Lalá, "Defence Reform Challenges and Democratisation in Post-conflict Mozambique", EU Working Paper, 2009.

<sup>163</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Frelimo central committee member, foreign diplomat, Maputo, March 2021. Between 1990 and 2000, Mozambique's military spending as a proportion of GDP plummeted from 10.1 per cent to 2.5 per cent. See "Budgeting for the Military Sector in Africa: The Processes and Mechanisms of Control", Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2006.

<sup>164</sup> See "Mozambique and the 'Tuna Bond' Scandal", *Spotlight on Corruption*, n.d. The navy has an estimated eight patrol ships and 30 boats for interception, but many vessels are not functional due to lack of maintenance. Crisis Group interview, military expert, April 2021.

<sup>165</sup> Mozambique's police force is made up of three separate units: Public Order and Security Police; Criminal Investigative Police; and Special Forces Police. The Special Forces is subdivided into other units, including the UIR, Forces Responsible for Protection and Border Guards, as well as special

As the crisis erupted, the UIR thus became the main security organ fighting militants. Under Police Commander Bernardino Rafael, the force kept al-Shabab from expanding even further. But Nyusi's reliance on Bernardino, a Makonde career officer, antagonised those who see him as yet another expression of Makonde dominance in political and security decisions related to Cabo Delgado.<sup>166</sup> Amid these tensions, the UIR had trouble securing ammunition and logistical support from the FADM, hampering its operations in 2020.<sup>167</sup> Meanwhile, Nyusi attempted to involve the FADM further in counter-insurgency efforts by appointing Eugénio Mussa, a prominent military commander stationed in Cabo Delgado, as chief of army staff. This effort stalled when Mussa died in February 2021.<sup>168</sup>

The president has pressed on with his priority of placing the FADM at the heart of the country's security response.<sup>169</sup> Maputo has been pushing for more direct bilateral support from its foreign partners, asking them for training and materiel including for the urgent creation of specialised combat units comprised of marines and commandos.<sup>170</sup> After the Palma attack, former colonial power Portugal is expediting the provision of Mozambique's security forces with an array of specialised training.<sup>171</sup> The U.S., keen to develop a relationship with gas-rich Mozambique, has also reactivated a training program for Mozambican forces.<sup>172</sup> The European Union (EU) is also proposing deploying a long-term training mission of perhaps up to 300 person-

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task forces. The police force faces challenges of low manpower, low salaries and limited resources, especially in rural areas. See "Mozambique to 2018: Managers, Mediators and Magnates", Chatham House Report, June 2015. Between 2015 and 2020, the interior ministry, which manages the police, saw its budget rise from 7.6 billion to 15.5 billion Mozambican meticaís (\$123 million to \$251 million), in comparison to an increase from 5.1 billion to 8.1 billion (\$83 million to \$131 million) at the defence ministry. Defence ministry consultant calculations shown to Crisis Group, Maputo, March 2021.

<sup>166</sup> Crisis Group interview, Frelimo central committee member, Maputo, March 2021.

<sup>167</sup> Crisis Group interview, security source working with Bernadino, February 2021.

<sup>168</sup> See "Mozambique: General Eugénio Mussa, FADM chief of staff, dies after illness", *Club of Mozambique*, 8 February 2021. Mussa was an ethnic Makua.

<sup>169</sup> On 11 March 2021, Nyusi reshuffled the military in a sign that he was consolidating his grip on the FADM. Joaquim Rivas Mangrassa, promoted to admiral, succeeded Mussa. Prior to his promotion, he was head of the Military House of the Presidency.

<sup>170</sup> See "Mozambique asks EU for help in tackling insurgency", Reuters, 23 September 2020. Defence Minister Jaime Neto told Crisis Group in Maputo in March 2021 that the ministry was considering a plan to deploy two 1,000-troop units, each made up of marines and commandos, to operate in Cabo Delgado. But he said: "We will not have enough resources to finance this ourselves". A European External Action Service memo seen by Crisis Group states that Maputo has subdivided the two units into six companies each and has also requested assistance to purchase a squadron of attack helicopters as well as naval patrol and speedboats.

<sup>171</sup> "Mozambique: Portugal to send special forces military trainers 'from early April' – Lusa", *Club of Mozambique*, 30 March 2021; and "Mozambique will take 'all possible advantages' from military cooperation with Portugal", AllAfrica, 11 May 2021. See also "Portugal to send another 60 troops to Mozambique on training mission", Reuters, 10 May 2021. Portugal will deploy 60 trainers in addition to 21 already present in the country, as well as intelligence gathering and monitoring drone capacities.

<sup>172</sup> "American soldiers help Mozambique battle an expanding ISIS affiliate", *The New York Times*, 7 April 2021. In 2020, the International Development Finance Corporation, a U.S. government development bank, approved a \$1.5 billion political risk insurance deal to support the Romuva natural gas project under development by ExxonMobil and Italian oil giant Eni. See "USA's DFC approves transactions to Mozambique totalling \$1.7 billion", *The Africa Report*, 17 September 2020.



nel to Mozambique.<sup>173</sup> In terms of equipment, the government has recently acquired armoured vehicles and helicopters from a South African defence and aerospace company, which also has a subsidiary training unit present in Mozambique.<sup>174</sup> Mozambican officials say they would still need more equipment for units to be deployed effectively against al-Shabab.

Some European and other Western governments are wary of providing Mozambique military hardware to FADM units until they have at least completed their training, citing the allegations of abuses by security forces and government contractors during past campaigns to combat al-Shabab.<sup>175</sup> External partners also want to ensure Mozambique's military can maintain such materiel and avoid defectors running off with equipment, or personnel selling it.<sup>176</sup> They also worry about how security forces will manage local militias whom they have relied on to combat al-Shabab, and whether the use of these forces and the distribution of weapons among them by the UIR, FADM or anyone else could constitute another security risk going forward, even if the militias have been useful allies of the security forces until now.<sup>177</sup> Even were the EU inclined to finance the provision of lethal assistance, the European Peace

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<sup>173</sup> "Foreign Affairs Council (Defence): Remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell at the press conference", EEAS press release, 6 May 2021. Borrell reportedly referred to a personnel figure of between 200 and 300 in an interview with Portugal's radio network *Renascença*.

<sup>174</sup> Security sources say Mozambique has imported Gazelle, Mi-17 and Mi-24 helicopters, as well as a number of Marauder vehicles, supplied by Paramount, a South African defence company. Paramount recently purchased Burnham Global, a Dubai-based firm advised by Sir Graeme Lamb, who served as deputy commanding general of multinational forces in Iraq. Crisis Group interviews, security and military sources, December 2020-March 2021. Crisis Group interview, adviser for Mozambican defence ministry, Maputo, March 2021. Burnham is understood to be training some Mozambican forces. Crisis Group interview, diplomat, May 2021. See also "Mozambique looks to private sector in war against Islamists", *Financial Times*, 15 March 2021.

<sup>175</sup> Rights groups have alleged that security forces have been involved in arbitrary arrests and detention, torture, wrongful force against civilians and extrajudicial investigations. "EU Counterinsurgency Aid to Mozambique Should Help Protect Rights", Human Rights Watch, 14 October 2020. See "What I Saw is Death: War Crimes in Mozambique's Forgotten Cape", Amnesty International, 2 March 2021. Authorities have already dismissed some of the allegations based on video evidence of alleged security force abuses as the work of al-Shabab fighters in government uniform. Amnesty also accused Dyck of firing on civilians. "South African company to investigate after Amnesty says it shot at civilians in Mozambique", Reuters, 2 March 2021. Shop owners in Mocímboa da Praia and Palma have told Crisis Group that security forces looted their businesses after the August 2020 and March 2021 attacks. Crisis Group interviews, Pemba and by telephone, February and April 2021. President Nyusi has meanwhile promised investigations into alleged government abuses. See "Moçambique: Nyusi anuncia investigação a alegadas violações do exército em Cabo Delgado", VOA, 7 April 2021.

<sup>176</sup> Views expressed in confidential diplomatic working paper, dated March 2021.

<sup>177</sup> Security and Frelimo sources say the three or four groups of militias, often referred to generically as *antigos combatentes* and comprised of some war veterans, are based around Mueda/Muidumbe (Makonde), Palma/Nangade (Makonde and other minorities) and Macomia (Makua). During the conflict, a number of reported clashes have also taken place between the militias and the FADM. Crisis Group interviews, security source, Maputo, February 2021; senior Frelimo figure, Pemba, March 2012.

Facility, which is where any financing would come from, is not expected to be functional until July 2021.<sup>178</sup>

### B. *Promises of Development and Humanitarian Aid*

The humanitarian situation in Cabo Delgado is dire. Thousands of people fleeing violence have crammed into Pemba and other towns, stretching public services in the capital and draining the resources of host families.<sup>179</sup> Thousands more sit in displacement camps in the province's south and in neighbouring provinces. The government has started to offer many displaced families access to land and services in about 100 new villages in the south, which remains untroubled by violence. It is unclear, however, whether the people installed there can adapt to new livelihoods. Until security improves in their places of origin, there is little alternative, officials say, other than to relocate them to these villages.<sup>180</sup> These villages, however, can only absorb a fraction of the displaced. Aid organisations, meanwhile, complain that government delays in issuing visas and clearing items at customs have stymied their operations across various districts.<sup>181</sup>

As the crisis has unfolded, Maputo has developed plans to draw in hundreds of millions of donor dollars for aid and development projects in Cabo Delgado and the north.<sup>182</sup> In March 2020, the government created the Northern Integrated Development Agency, an institution mandated to coordinate humanitarian assistance and support economic growth and youth employment in the provinces of Cabo Delgado, Niassa and Nampula.<sup>183</sup> The Agency comes under the management of the minister for agricultural and rural development, Celso Correia, a former campaign manager for Nyusi. In April 2021, the government also entered into an agreement to receive \$100 million allocated by the World Bank for use primarily in supporting basic infrastructure and livelihood creation for thousands of people displaced as a result of the conflict.<sup>184</sup> The National Fund for Sustainable Development, also part of Correia's ministry, will be responsible for procurement related to any funded projects, assisted by the UN Office for Project Services.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> For details on the European Peace Facility, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°297, *How to Spend It: New EU Funding for African Peace and Security*, 14 January 2021.

<sup>179</sup> "Mozambique city overwhelmed by people fleeing Islamist violence", Reuters, 5 April 2021.

<sup>180</sup> Conflict mitigation assessment drafted by donor entity, March 2021.

<sup>181</sup> Crisis Group interviews, humanitarian workers and officials, Maputo and Pemba, February 2021.

<sup>182</sup> Mozambique is eligible for up to \$700 million from the Prevention and Resilience Allocation under the Bank's International Development Association. This allocation is additional to the regular \$1.3 billion allocation for Mozambique. Subject to confirmation by the end of April 2021, Mozambique should have a total allocation of \$2 billion, or the equivalent, of which significant funds can be allocated to the north.

<sup>183</sup> Crisis Group interview, Northern Integrated Development Agency representative, Pemba, February 2021. See *Boletim da República*, 18 March 2020.

<sup>184</sup> "International Development Association Project Appraisal Document on a Proposed Grant in the Amount of SDR 70.6 Million (US\$100 Million Equivalent) to the Republic of Mozambique for a Northern Crisis Recovery Project", World Bank, 14 April 2021.

<sup>185</sup> The Fund is due to act as an implementer for a Project Steering Committee that will be managed under the supervision of Correia's ministry, elected governors and provincial state secretaries who in turn report directly to the president, while the Northern Integrated Development Agency will

Questions remain, however, about what role the Agency will play going forward and whether it should not be engaging more directly with the province's population to survey what people say they need, besides security, in the areas to which they eventually want to return.<sup>186</sup> Some civil society organisations have expressed concerns that there are insufficient safeguards for how funds will be used, and also worry that there is not enough of an emphasis on using the funds to support the return of civilians to their native districts.<sup>187</sup>

### C. *Regional Intervention Plans*

As Cabo Delgado's crisis has escalated, neighbouring countries have pushed to get more involved. Southern African Development Community states are keen to put boots on the ground, worried that insecurity could spread north into Tanzania and south toward Mozambique's central regions bordering Southern African states. But an agreement has been elusive. Critics suggest that the Mozambican president, who is currently SADC chairman, has resisted regional intervention because he does not want to open up Cabo Delgado and its illicit political economy to prying eyes.<sup>188</sup> The president's supporters dismiss these views as unfounded assertions, and add that if he has been cautious, it is because he is merely trying to ensure that any foreign intervention is thought through carefully and that Mozambique retains control over it.<sup>189</sup>

The road up to this point has been tortuous. Initial SADC consultations in 2020 delivered little of consequence. The 19 May 2020 meeting of SADC's Organ on Politics, Defence and Security (also known as the Organ Troika) held in Harare ended with a communiqué saying the bloc was committed to fighting the "terrorists" in Mozambique, but giving no further details.<sup>190</sup> Two days later, South Africa's Foreign Minister Pandor stated that Pretoria was "in negotiations" with Maputo to provide assistance, although little, if anything, was agreed.<sup>191</sup> A meeting of Organ Troika committees in June resulted in commitments from SADC countries to deploy, but without Mozambique's green light.

Toward the end of 2020, SADC member states became increasingly impatient at Maputo's hesitation but discussions still yielded nothing.<sup>192</sup> At a two-day Troika Summit in Gaborone, Botswana, in late November, which was attended by regional presidents (except Nyusi, who was represented by his defence minister, Jaime Neto)

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maintain the Committee's secretariat. The UN Office for Project Services will assist the Fund in procurement and auditing.

<sup>186</sup> Crisis Group interviews, donor officials from a country providing funds to the World Bank, April 2021.

<sup>187</sup> Crisis Group interview, civil society organisation representative, Maputo, February 2021.

<sup>188</sup> Crisis Group interview, Mozambican activist, Maputo, February 2021. See also R.W. Johnson, "A Mozambican mystery story", Politicsweb, 17 May 2021.

<sup>189</sup> Crisis Group interview, Frelimo member, Maputo, March 2021.

<sup>190</sup> "Communiqué of the Extraordinary Organ Troika plus Republic of Mozambique Summit of Heads of State and Government", Harare, 19 May 2020. The Organ Troika consists of three SADC member states and includes the "outgoing" and "incoming" chairs. The chair is rotated annually at the Heads of State and Government Summit convened in August.

<sup>191</sup> "Mozambique in talks with South Africa to help fight insurgency", Bloomberg, 23 May 2020.

<sup>192</sup> Crisis Group interview, South African diplomat, Johannesburg, March 2021.

the bloc issued a communiqué saying it had “directed” a regional response for the crisis in Mozambique, although it imposed no time frame.<sup>193</sup> Troika leaders (Botswana, Zimbabwe and South Africa) pushed for a follow-up meeting on 14 December, hosted by Nyusi. But further talks on a regional intervention stalled and a decision on SADC assistance was pushed back to a dedicated summit on Cabo Delgado scheduled for 14 January.<sup>194</sup> That summit was then postponed, ostensibly due to a surge of COVID-19 in the region. Mozambique’s foreign ministry declared on 12 February that a SADC summit might convene in either May or June.

The Palma attack upped pressure on Nyusi. Following the attack, and in his capacity as SADC chair, Nyusi gave in and called an extraordinary “Double Troika” SADC meeting on 8 April where the bloc committed to send a technical team from neighbouring states to Maputo to assess what the regional role in fighting al-Shabab could be.<sup>195</sup> A day before the meeting, Nyusi stated that Mozambique would lead any military operation involving SADC. “Those who arrive from abroad will not replace us. They will support us”, he said in a state television broadcast. “It’s about sovereignty”.<sup>196</sup> In published closing remarks a day later, he stated that Mozambique would be ready to act “in a coordinated manner and with a support structure and specific regional actions to sustain the threat of terrorism”.<sup>197</sup> Zimbabwe’s ministry of information tweeted that SADC agreed that a force “should be resuscitated and capacitated immediately so that it can intervene”.<sup>198</sup>

Nyusi still appears to be hesitant, worried about whether such a force, were it ever deployed, would be impossible to control.<sup>199</sup> A leaked report by a SADC technical team recommending the deployment of a combined force of 3,000 personnel in army, navy and air units has already been rejected by Mozambique’s officials, some of whom also feel the leak was a way of putting Maputo under undue pressure to accept

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<sup>193</sup> “Communiqué of the Extraordinary Organ Troika Summit Plus Force Intervention Brigade – Troop Contributing Countries, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Mozambique”, 27 November 2020.

<sup>194</sup> Crisis Group interviews, diplomats, Maputo, February-March 2021.

<sup>195</sup> “Communiqué of the Extraordinary Double Troika Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Southern African Development Community”, 8 April 2021. Countries represented by their heads of state were South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Malawi. Tanzania sent the president of Zanzibar to stand in for President Samia Suluhu Hassan.

<sup>196</sup> “Mozambique seeks targeted foreign support to help tackle insurgency – president”, Reuters, 7 April 2021.

<sup>197</sup> “Closing remarks by his Excellency Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, President of the Republic of Mozambique and Chairperson of SADC at the Extraordinary SADC Double Troika Summit”, available on the Republic of Botswana’s Facebook page. Nyusi has begun to use the term “violent extremists” to describe al-Shabab, which sources close to him say is an indication that he is now open to seeing al-Shabab fighters not so much as jihadists but as generic violent actors whose grievances can be redressed. Crisis Group interview, adviser to Nyusi, May 2021.

<sup>198</sup> Tweet by Zimbabwe’s Ministry of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting, @InfoMinZW, 2:17pm, 8 April 2021.

<sup>199</sup> Crisis Group telephone interviews, SADC member military source, regional diplomat, April 2021. “His lines on sovereignty were really to placate his domestic audience”, said a senior South African military official. Crisis Group telephone interview, 19 April 2021.

a deployment of this magnitude.<sup>200</sup> The follow-up SADC summit of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security, due to occur on 28 April, was postponed, with South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa tending to a pressing domestic engagement and Botswana's President Mokgweetsi Masisi indisposed due to a COVID-19 quarantine restriction.<sup>201</sup>

In the meantime, Nyusi has now begun to take advice from Rwanda's President Paul Kagame on how to manage the military response to al-Shabab. On the same day that the SADC meeting was postponed, Nyusi flew to Kigali to meet Kagame and Rwandan security officials to discuss possible security cooperation. A Rwandan military assessment team followed up with a visit to Cabo Delgado.<sup>202</sup> Security and diplomatic sources say discussions between the two sides centre around the possible deployment of a small contingent of Rwandan forces who could support Mozambican security forces in counter-insurgency operations.<sup>203</sup> Meanwhile, a follow-up SADC meeting on 27 May again yielded no concrete agreement.<sup>204</sup>

#### D. *Security Cooperation with Tanzania*

Ever since the Kibiti crackdowns, Tanzania has been on guard for a resurgence of violence on its own turf. Tanzanian authorities have taken a restrictive approach to border policing, fearing that militants based in Mozambique will cross back and forth at will and stage further attacks on Tanzanian forces. The UN has criticised Tanzania's policy of either blocking entry for civilians fleeing Cabo Delgado or expelling them back into the province.<sup>205</sup> A ban on cross-border exports of food into Cabo Delgado in February led to higher food prices and more human suffering in Palma.<sup>206</sup>

Bilateral relations between Mozambique and Tanzania are cordial but at times strained. In January 2021, Nyusi, Bernardino and Mussa travelled to Tanzania and led to the formal tightening of police and intelligence cooperation between the two neighbours and the extradition of hundreds of suspects in Tanzania to Mozambique.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> "Report of the Double Troika Plus Angola Technical Assessment Mission to the Republic of Mozambique on the Assessment of the Security Situation in Cabo Delgado and Required Regional Support". Undated document reviewed and verified by Crisis Group.

<sup>201</sup> Press release, Office of the President of Botswana, 28 April 2021. Ramaphosa was attending the Zondo Commission of Inquiry.

<sup>202</sup> See "Mozambique: Nyusi flew to Rwanda for talks with Kagame; fight against terrorism at the top of the agenda – Watch", *Club of Mozambique*, 29 April 2021. Rwandan military officials were seen in Pemba in mid-May 2021; Crisis Group telephone interview, diplomat and eyewitness, May 2021. Other diplomats believe the move to meet Kagame is a signal by Nyusi to SADC that he has other options ready. Crisis Group telephone interview, May 2021.

<sup>203</sup> Crisis Group telephone interviews, security source and diplomat, May 2021.

<sup>204</sup> "SADC decides on another summit as it holds off on military response to Mozambique," Defence Web, 28 May 2021.

<sup>205</sup> See also "U.N. warns Tanzania not to reject people fleeing Mozambique violence", Reuters, 6 April 2021; and "UNHCR appeals for Mozambicans fleeing violence to be given access to asylum in Tanzania", Reliefweb, 18 May 2021.

<sup>206</sup> See "Cabo Ligado Monthly: February 2021".

<sup>207</sup> See "Mozambique, Tanzania join forces to tackle Cabo Delgado violence", Al Jazeera, 23 November 2020. "Tanzania, Mozambique sign MoU in curbing terrorism, drugs trafficking", *Club of Mozambique*, 16 January 2018. The ambassador to Tanzania is a former deputy operations chief at the Serviço de Informações e Segurança do Estado, or national intelligence service.

Yet some Mozambican officials privately gripe that the cooperation is undermined by the Tanzanian security services' tolerance for smugglers and traffickers, who are in turn connected to the Mozambican al-Shabab and who allegedly receive protection from powerful political and security figures in Tanzania.<sup>208</sup> Mozambican officials say they hope for better cooperation from the Tanzanian authorities under the new presidency of Samia Suluhu Hassan.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Mozambican government official, senior Cislamo figure, Maputo, March 2021.

<sup>209</sup> Crisis Group telephone interview, Mozambican official, May 2021.

## VII. Stemming the Insurrection

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The Palma attack seems to have focused minds in Maputo and further afield: turning the tide in Cabo Delgado is urgent, lest the humanitarian crisis keep worsening and the insurrection pose a broader threat to national and regional stability. Mozambique's government has a range of proposals on the table, including the option of inviting in external forces to provide additional security. But it needs to act in a measured fashion, so that security operations are complemented by efforts to address local grievances, in order to avoid what Nyusi himself warns could otherwise become an ineffective and unfocused "salad of interventions".<sup>210</sup>

### A. *An Urgent but Measured Security Response*

Maputo's instinct to rebuild the army is sound, but this task will take time. In the interim, the country, already under financial strain from its debt scandal and thus likely to have to depend on external financing to upgrade its forces, will face limitations on how it can combat an enemy that has rebounded with greater ferocity every time it has come under pressure.

Some military assistance is on its way from Western governments and the EU, but in limited form. While these partners may be ready to come to Mozambique's assistance with military training, they have to date demurred from lavishing the country's security forces with weapons, wary of the human rights allegations surrounding the security services and eager to see the FADM first show greater discipline.<sup>211</sup> Mozambique is thus in a tough corner. Without capable security forces, Maputo will struggle to stabilise Cabo Delgado and may see al-Shabab plan further attacks and even spread into neighbouring provinces or Tanzania.

External military intervention is thus needed but should be measured. Diplomats, military experts and Mozambican authorities agree that a SADC force of 3,000 troops may well be an unrealistic proposition. Donors fear that the bill for standing up such a force would be prohibitive, given that SADC member state forces have their own capacity and logistical deficits. They also voice doubts that the proposal for this many men is based on a clear strategy; some think it may just be a way for some SADC member states to use the Mozambique crisis to justify international resources for their own militaries.<sup>212</sup>

SADC's intervention in the DRC already serves as a cautionary tale. Member state forces deployed as an intervention brigade under UN blue helmets in the DRC have for years struggled to finish off the ADF there, with their operations often compromised by poor cooperation with the DRC military authorities. In the meantime, the ADF continues its brutal attacks against civilians.<sup>213</sup> Security and Mozambican government sources fear that foreign troops with limited understanding of the local environment would similarly struggle against al-Shabab. If they got bogged down in

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<sup>210</sup> Crisis Group review of English translation of Nyusi's December 2020 state of the nation speech.

<sup>211</sup> Crisis Group interview, European diplomat, Maputo, February 2021.

<sup>212</sup> Crisis Group interviews, diplomat advising Mozambique's government on its counter-terrorism strategy, Mozambican government official and military expert, May 2021.

<sup>213</sup> Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°148, *A New Approach for the UN to Stabilise the DR Congo*, 4 December 2019.

a long conflict, they could attract more foreign fighters eager to take on international forces and turn the province into a battlefield pitting Western-backed forces against transnational jihadists seeking to open a new frontier. Many security experts and some in government are in any case sceptical whether it is possible to eradicate al-Shabab. They believe a more realistic goal would be stemming the militants' expansion while offering its fighters incentives to demobilise.<sup>214</sup>

Rather than accept a very heavy regional force that risks a quagmire, Mozambique might better benefit from the provision of military advisers, intelligence capabilities and limited but effective combat support from its regional and international partners. Such assistance should be deployed in support of the elite Mozambican commandos and marines that are already being trained up by international partners to spearhead FADM operations against al-Shabab. Donors should be able to extend a limited amount of hardware to these units, with fewer concerns, given the specialised training they are receiving. All contributing parties should agree that these Mozambican forces will lead operations against al-Shabab. Agreements for external combat support should be time-bound so as to allow flexibility in adjusting any mandate or reassigning responsibilities.

Operations should be geared toward stopping the militants' expansion and squeezing al-Shabab so that its fighters start to consider leaving the group. In the meantime, regular FADM units and the police, including the UIR, could secure population centres and provide reassurance to civilians able to return to their districts.<sup>215</sup>

Organising the fight this way achieves three things. First, targeted operations would ensure that the militants are not given free rein to plan more major attacks. Secondly, while operations proceed, Maputo could separately focus on upgrading the broader capabilities of the FADM and police, as they undergo longer-term training. To prepare the ground, Maputo should also conduct a full audit of the logistics base and organisational structures of its military and police forces. An audit would allow Mozambique's partners to assess what long-term assistance to give – from updating command-and-control systems to improving stockpile management and maintenance skills – so as to help reform and rebuild the FADM and the police. Thirdly, in avoiding heavy external deployment that could turn the conflict into a quagmire, authorities will also have space to use the tool of dialogue to encourage al-Shabab fighters to demobilise.

### B. *Development, Dialogue and Demobilisation*

Knowing that a military solution on its own will not be enough to stem the insurrection, government officials are also keen to use development initiatives as a tool to soothe public opinion, persuade militants to quit al-Shabab and ensure they do not relapse into militancy if they do leave the group as a result of military pressure. Of

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<sup>214</sup> "We will never defeat them", said one defence ministry adviser. Crisis Group interview, Maputo, March 2021. Many security experts consulted by Crisis Group expressed similar views in interviews conducted between December 2020 and March 2021.

<sup>215</sup> Tanzania, South Africa and Mozambique could revitalise the trilateral maritime agreement they signed in 2012 to achieve this end. See "Minister Sisulu signs Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Security Cooperation with Tanzania and Mozambique", press release, Government of South Africa, 7 February 2012.



course, militants may not be responsive to such a bargain if they have become ideologically gripped by jihad, or if they feel their career path within al-Shabab is a better bet.<sup>216</sup> Officials are also wary they may not have anything to offer harder-line Tanzanian leaders of the group who are not part of Cabo Delgado's political fabric, and that some Mozambican militants may now be committed jihadists.<sup>217</sup> Still, they and community leaders believe it is possible to appeal to the interests of the vast majority of Mozambican militants who may well consider the option of defecting permanently if the state can demonstrate it is committed to addressing their grievances and keeping them gainfully employed.<sup>218</sup>

Even leaving aside the question of whether militants will be open to such an approach, there are other challenges to using aid in this way. Given the kinship ties between militants and their original communities, government officials believe they can use development funds to rebuild trust with locals and reach back through the communities to al-Shabab fighters to persuade them to defect.<sup>219</sup> Local activists and staff from the Northern Integrated Development Agency warn, however, that unless aid is channelled into communities through a series of consultations with local populations, it could enflame local tensions, as donors have found out in the Sahel.<sup>220</sup> In addition, unless development spending is all accounted for, it may fuel perceptions that the authorities are not responding to locals' concerns directly and that funds are being misappropriated.<sup>221</sup>

Various government officials from different ministries and provincial offices are already tasked with consulting local populations, but the authorities should request that this dialogue take place through the Agency, which should identify local leaders who can win the trust of communities and coordinate initiatives to avoid overlap. Nyusi stated as far back as 2019 that he would be willing to initiate dialogue with militants.<sup>222</sup> The Agency thus has a role to play in terms of kick-starting that process and should work with locals and defectors to find ways of communicating with militants and explaining what they might have to gain by leaving al-Shabab. In addition,

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<sup>216</sup> Crisis Group interview, intelligence source in contact with militants, Pemba, February 2021. See also "Caracterização e organização social dos Machababos", op. cit., for descriptions of jihadist ideologies circulating in al-Shabab camps, particularly among Tanzanians.

<sup>217</sup> Crisis Group interview, Mozambican interior ministry official, Maputo, March 2021.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid. Crisis Group interview, senior civil society leader in contact with former al-Shabab defectors, Pemba, March 2021.

<sup>219</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Northern Integrated Development Agency official, Pemba, February 2021; interior ministry official, Maputo, March 2021; senior civil society leader, Pemba, February 2021; intelligence source who is monitoring al-Shabab communications, May 2021.

<sup>220</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Mozambican governance and anti-corruption campaigner, Maputo, February 2021; youth activist in Cabo Delgado, Pemba, February 2021; senior adviser to Northern Integrated Development Agency, Pemba, February 2021. See also Crisis Group Africa Report N°299, *A Course Correction for the Sahel Stabilisation Strategy*, 1 February 2021.

<sup>221</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Mozambican governance and anti-corruption campaigner, Maputo, February 2021; youth activist in Cabo Delgado, Pemba, February 2021; senior adviser to Northern Integrated Development Agency, Pemba, February 2021.

<sup>222</sup> See "Dialogue with terrorists a quandary to Mozambique government", CAJ News Africa, 26 September 2019. Government officials say Nyusi is still open to dialogue. Crisis Group interview, presidential adviser, Maputo, March 2021.

the government could then work with other community leaders and figures of influence to keep the dialogue going.

To complement the Agency's work in building trust with the population and civil society, further measures are required. Firstly, the government and donors should channel resources equally across Cabo Delgado's different communities, to avoid enflaming tensions between Makonde and the Mwani and Makua. Secondly, the Agency should include representatives of opposition groups including Renamo, which has large support among certain constituencies in Cabo Delgado, such as the Mwani of Mocímboa da Praia. Doing so would demonstrate that it has the backing of the entire political system and lend the process broader legitimacy across the public spectrum. Thirdly, the National Fund for Sustainable Development, with UN assistance, should publish quarterly updates on how the government is spending World Bank aid and who is benefiting.

If it is possible to induce al-Shabab fighters to demobilise, there will also have to be a safe way out of the movement. The government should work on developing an exit corridor for surrender, drawing on the experience, for example, of Nigeria, which has in place a process for receiving defectors, providing them with livelihood training and reintegrating them into society, although it has much work to do to improve the system, including ridding it of abuses committed against defectors by various security officials.<sup>223</sup> Maputo may also want to consider what specific security role it can assign to militant defectors, including in the port town of Mocímboa da Praia itself.

Nyusi has already stated that he would favour a policy of giving amnesties to Mozambican al-Shabab fighters. "We are ready to receive them and reintegrate them back into society", he said in early April.<sup>224</sup> To make this proposition palatable to the public, the government should also step up its support for the Attorney General's Office to prosecute high-level al-Shabab leaders who fall into military custody, in order to demonstrate that justice is also being served.

### C. *Easing Restrictions on Humanitarian Aid*

Mozambican authorities have taken a cautious approach to humanitarian assistance. While there is no official policy to block aid, humanitarian agencies have consistently reported that authorities slow their operations, for instance by delaying workers' visas. Some Mozambican officials claim the reason for such interference is that national intelligence services remain concerned that militants will infiltrate humanitarian agency camps to feed themselves, or that humanitarian workers may end up negotiating access with militants who may demand payoffs or even divert humanitarian aid.<sup>225</sup>

Yet stepping up humanitarian assistance in various districts, in addition to whatever security improvements can be delivered locally, will be crucial for persuading

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<sup>223</sup> Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°170, *An Exit from Boko Haram? Assessing Nigeria's Operation Safe Corridor*, 19 March 2021. Interior Minister Amade Miquidade said: "We would like help with building such a concept for demobilisation and reintegration". Crisis Group interview, Maputo, March 2021.

<sup>224</sup> "Mozambique's president says Palma rid of terrorists", Anadolu Agency, 8 April 2021.

<sup>225</sup> Crisis Group interview, government official, Maputo, March 2021.

the population to return to depopulated districts and thus playing a role in the recovery of their communities. The government should work with a diplomatic task force that has been set up to facilitate international aid for Mozambique's fight to contain COVID-19, and which also engages on other priority issues, to unlock bureaucratic delays facing international aid agencies so that they can escalate aid deliveries to needy populations and prepare the ground for further interventions in the wake of military operations.<sup>226</sup>

#### D. *International Law Enforcement Cooperation*

While al-Shabab remains primarily a Mozambican affair, regional governments in East and Southern Africa are also working hard to stop any attempt by foreign elements from the continent and farther afield to fuel violence in Cabo Delgado. While ISIS ties and influence over al-Shabab in Mozambique appear rather limited, Maputo and its allies still fear that the global movement could plug into the various criminal and jihadist networks operating in the region to channel more trainers, funds, weapons, drones and perhaps even components of improvised explosives into Mozambique.

Beyond bilateral relationships, countries in East and Southern Africa rely on several institutions for intelligence and law enforcement cooperation: the African Union's Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa, Interpol and financial intelligence units of governments that work with the Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group. This cooperation could be enhanced.

First, donors can assist the information flow by creating opportunities, formal and informal, for financial investigators, intelligence and law enforcement officials and prosecutors from East and Southern Africa to exchange information. Such meetings could be funded by external partners including but not limited to the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation and Department of Justice, who often convene counter-terrorism roundtables in the region.

Secondly, these countries should request assistance from SADC and the Horn of Africa's regional bloc, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, in developing a platform on which they could convene in various combinations depending on circumstances to share intelligence and plan law enforcement operations targeting relevant individuals and financial streams connected to the insurrection. The regional organisations should place a special emphasis on disrupting transnational support to networks that support al-Shabab in Mozambique and Tanzanian networks connected to the conflict in Cabo Delgado.

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<sup>226</sup> The task force comprises representatives from the UK, the U.S., Canada, Ireland, the Netherlands and Portugal, as well as the UN, the EU and SADC countries such as South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe.

## **VIII. Conclusion**

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While international headlines have focused of late on links between Cabo Delgado's militants and ISIS, the real drivers of conflict have more to do with local grievances and the state's inability to manage a snowballing security threat. Eager to help, Mozambique's external partners need to exercise caution or they risk making things worse. Foreign-backed counter-terrorism operations without a plan to address local tensions at their source could simply exacerbate human suffering, poverty and the resentment of the state that many locals feel. A wiser approach for Mozambique and its partners would combine military operations with efforts to address the conflict's local roots, building up the country's capacity to handle its own security problems, doing more to win over communities in which Mozambican militants originate and stepping up policing efforts against transnational jihadists and criminals who may try to exploit the crisis.

**Maputo/Nairobi/Brussels, 11 June 2021**

Appendix A: Map of Mozambique



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations or International Crisis Group. Based on UN Map No. 3706 Rev. 7 (July 2020)

## Appendix B: Timeline of Cabo Delgado Conflict

### 5 October 2017

Group of 30 fighters storms Mocímboa da Praia town in the first violent attack

### 8 October 2017

Security forces succeed in retaking the town

### December 2017

Security forces attack al-Shabab in Mitumbate, Mocímboa da Praia district

### 27 May 2018

Group beheads at least ten in an attack on the town of Olumbi, Palma district

### 5 June 2018

Militants burn homes and kill civilians in attack in Macomia district

### July 2018

Attacks on security forces positions in Mocímboa da Praia and Palma districts

### 21 February 2019

Attacks on convoys of Anadarko in Palma district alarm the gas industry

### 2 April 2019

Fighters attack military base in Mocímboa da Praia district

### Late April 2019

Cyclone Kenneth hits Cabo Delgado province

### 3 June 2019

Fighters of al-Shabab beat off security operation in Mocímboa da Praia district

### 4 June 2019

ISIS claims that al-Shabab fighters are "soldiers of the caliphate"

### 13 June 2019

Security forces and militants clash in Nangade district inland

### 20-24 August 2019

President Filipe Nyusi visits Russia

### 23 September 2019

Fighters kill ten in Mbau, Mocímboa da Praia district

### October 2019

Wagner mercenaries from Russia take part in counter-insurgency operation

### Mid-November 2019

First attack by al-Shabab militants in Tanzanian territory, in Ngongo village

### 23 January 2020

Attack by al-Shabab on Mbau, claimed by ISIS, kills more than twenty soldiers

### 29 January 2020

Militant attack on Bilibiza town, Quissanga district

### 23 March 2020

Fighters overrun military base in Mocímboa da Praia town and raise ISIS flag

### 25 March 2020

Fighters attack Quissanga town, beheading Eduardo Mondlane's statue

### Early April 2020

Dyck mercenaries repel militant attack in Muidumbe town

### 19 May 2020

SADC claims to be committed to fighting "terrorists" with no further details

### 21 May 2020

South Africa says it is "in negotiations" to assist Mozambique

### 28 May 2020

Fighters stage multiple attacks on Macomia town

### 27 June 2020

Militants attempt to take Mocímboa da Praia town

### 1 July 2020

Government and Dyck mercenaries kill dozens in a militant base in Quissanga district

### 5-15 August 2020

Militants take Mocímboa da Praia town, driving out the military and civilians

### 17 August 2020

President Filipe Nyusi assumes chairmanship of SADC

### 24 August 2020

Total announces agreement with government concerning security of liquefied natural gas (LNG) project

### 14 October 2020

300 fighters cross the border and carry out new attack in Tanzanian territory

### 11 November 2020

UN Secretary-General condemns massacre of 50 in Muidumbe district, after which militants take hold of district capital Namacande

### 27 November 2020

Filipe Nyusi skips Organ Troika summit that agrees on "regional response"

### December 2020

Several attacks near LNG project in Afungi

### 4 January 2021

Total confirms suspension of operations and withdraws non-security personnel

**14 January 2021**

SADC summit is postponed to either May or June due to COVID-19 surge

**10-11 February 2021**

Offensive against fighters' base in Mbau disrupts group's operations

**24 March 2021**

Around 120 heavily armed militants begin an attack on Palma town

**27 March 2021**

Total announces it is suspending operations

**29 March 2021**

ISIS claims attack on Palma town; veracity of the claim is later disputed

**4 April 2021**

Government claims to have retaken control of Palma

**7-8 April 2021**

SADC meeting agrees on technical team to assess a possible regional role

**26 April 2021**

Total declares force majeure on LNG project

**27 April 2021**

SADC's technical team report, suggesting almost 3,000 regional troops, is leaked

**28 April 2021**

SADC meeting to discuss technical team's report is postponed

**May 2021**

Government forces retake Namacande

**27 May 2021**

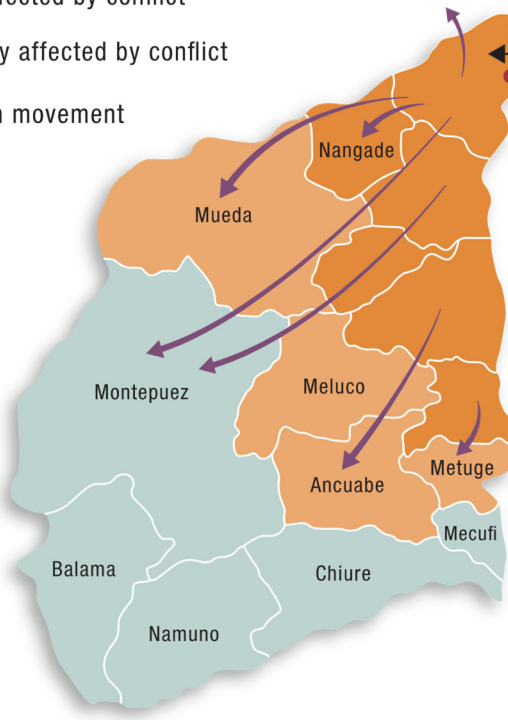
Another SADC meeting yields no agreement

Appendix C: Access and Displacement in Cabo Delgado

**December 2017**

First attacks on Cabo Delgado police stations by gunmen

- Heavily affected by conflict
- Moderately affected by conflict
- Population movement



**March 2021**

Militants conducted a major attack on Palma, killing scores and prompting Total to evacuate all its personnel from Palma

*Total Afungi LNG Project*

**August 2020**

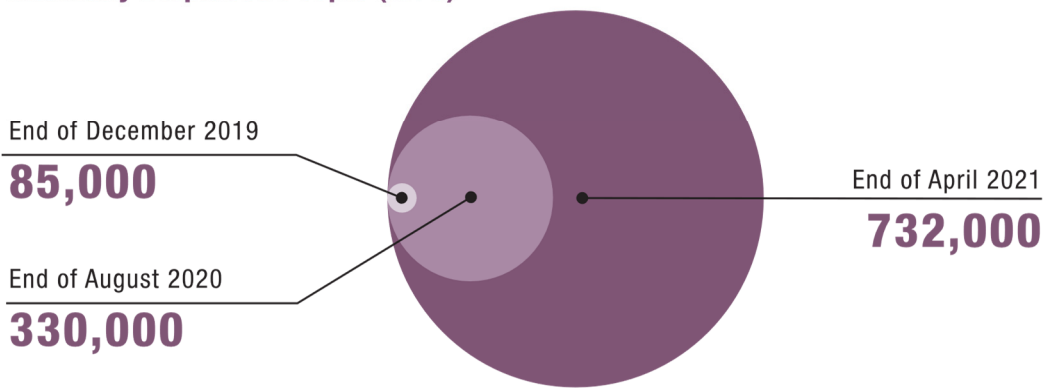
Militants drove out security forces and most of the population



INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP / KO / JUNE 2021

**Cabo Delgado**

**Internally Displaced People (IDPs)\***



\* All figures provided by the International Organization for Migration Displacement Tracking Matrix. The figure for December 2019 is a total figure for all civilians displaced from the conflict in Cabo Delgado, with all of them becoming IDPs in the province itself. The figures for August 2020 and April 2021 tally all civilians who were displaced by conflict in Cabo Delgado at those times, and who had become IDPs in Cabo Delgado as well as in other provinces.



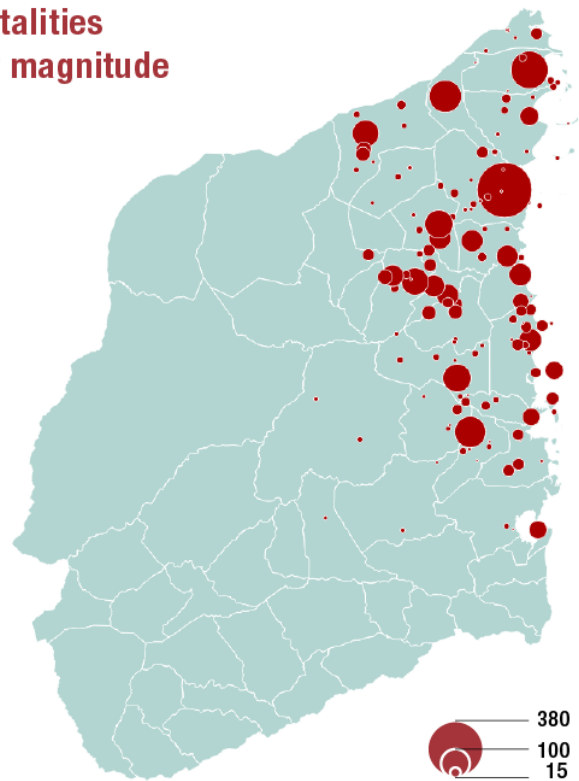
Appendix D: Reported Fatalities in Cabo Delgado  
 (January 2017-April 2021)



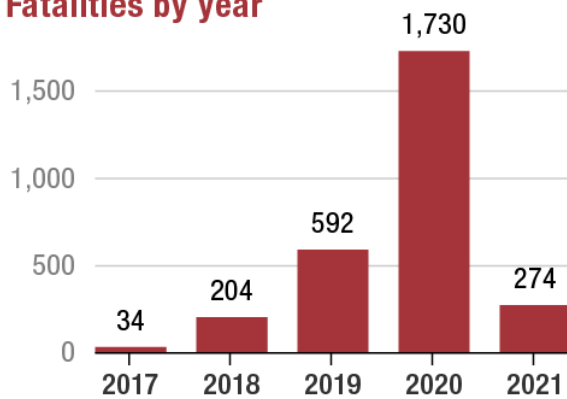
**2,834**  
 reported fatalities  
 since 2017

Of which **99%\***  
 were from organised  
 political violence.

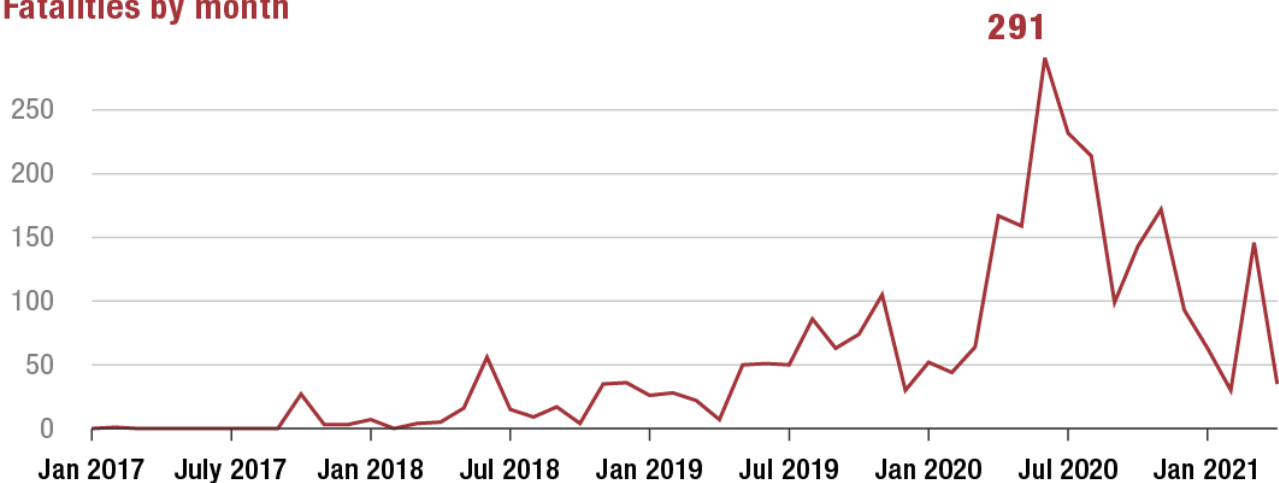
**Fatalities  
 by magnitude**



**Fatalities by year**



**Fatalities by month**

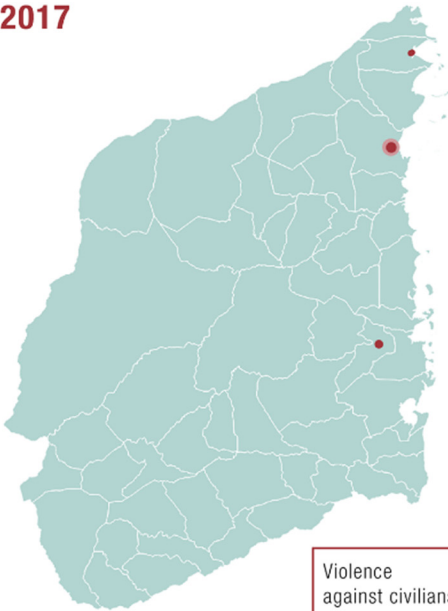


\* As recorded by ACLED, 2,822 fatalities came from organised political violence, which includes battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians.

Source: ACLED (Armed Conflict & Event Data Project), as of 30 April 2021. Note: numbers of reported fatalities should be regarded as indicative rather than definitive.

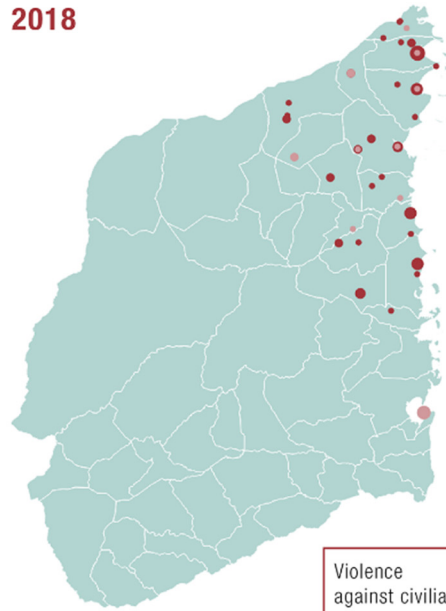
Appendix E: Map of Organised Political Violence in Cabo Delgado (2017-2020)

2017



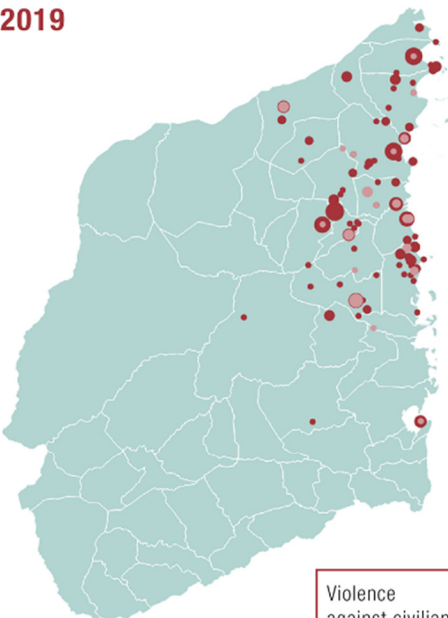
Violence against civilians	●	7
Battles	●	8
Explosions/remote violence	●	0

2018



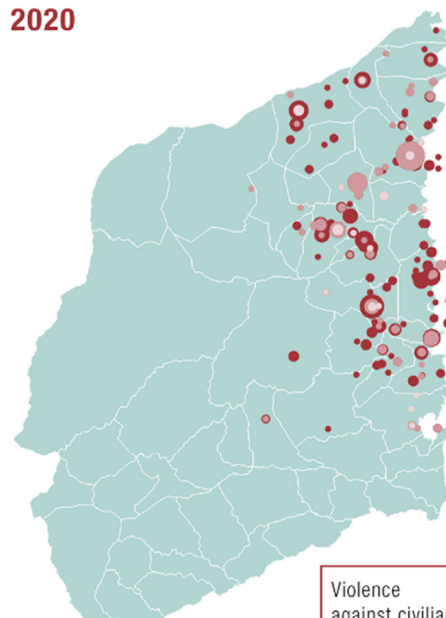
Violence against civilians	●	56
Battles	●	16
Explosions/remote violence	●	0

2019



Violence against civilians	●	162
Battles	●	36
Explosions/remote violence	●	0

2020



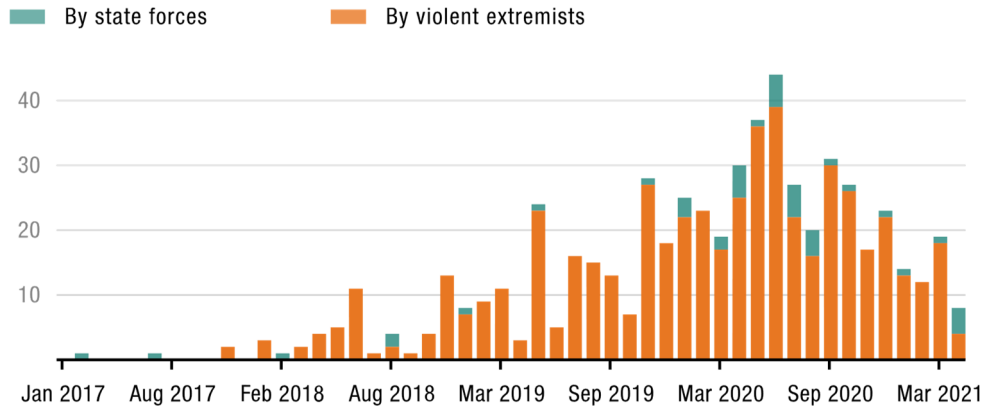
Violence against civilians	●	330
Battles	●	121
Explosions/remote violence	●	25

Source: ACLED (Armed Conflict & Event Data Project), as of 30 April 2021.

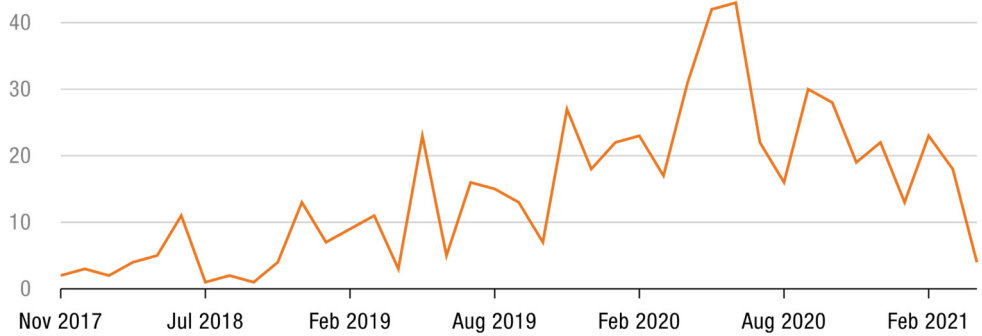
Note: organised political violence includes battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians as defined by the ACLED codebook.

Appendix F: Violence Targeting Civilians in Cabo Delgado (2017-2021)

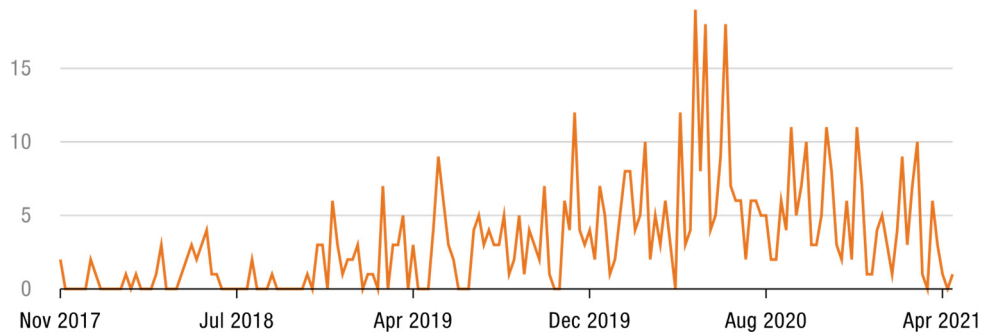
By State Forces vs. by Islamist militias/Violent extremists (January 2017-April 2021)



By Islamist militias/Violent extremists by month (October 2017-April 2021)

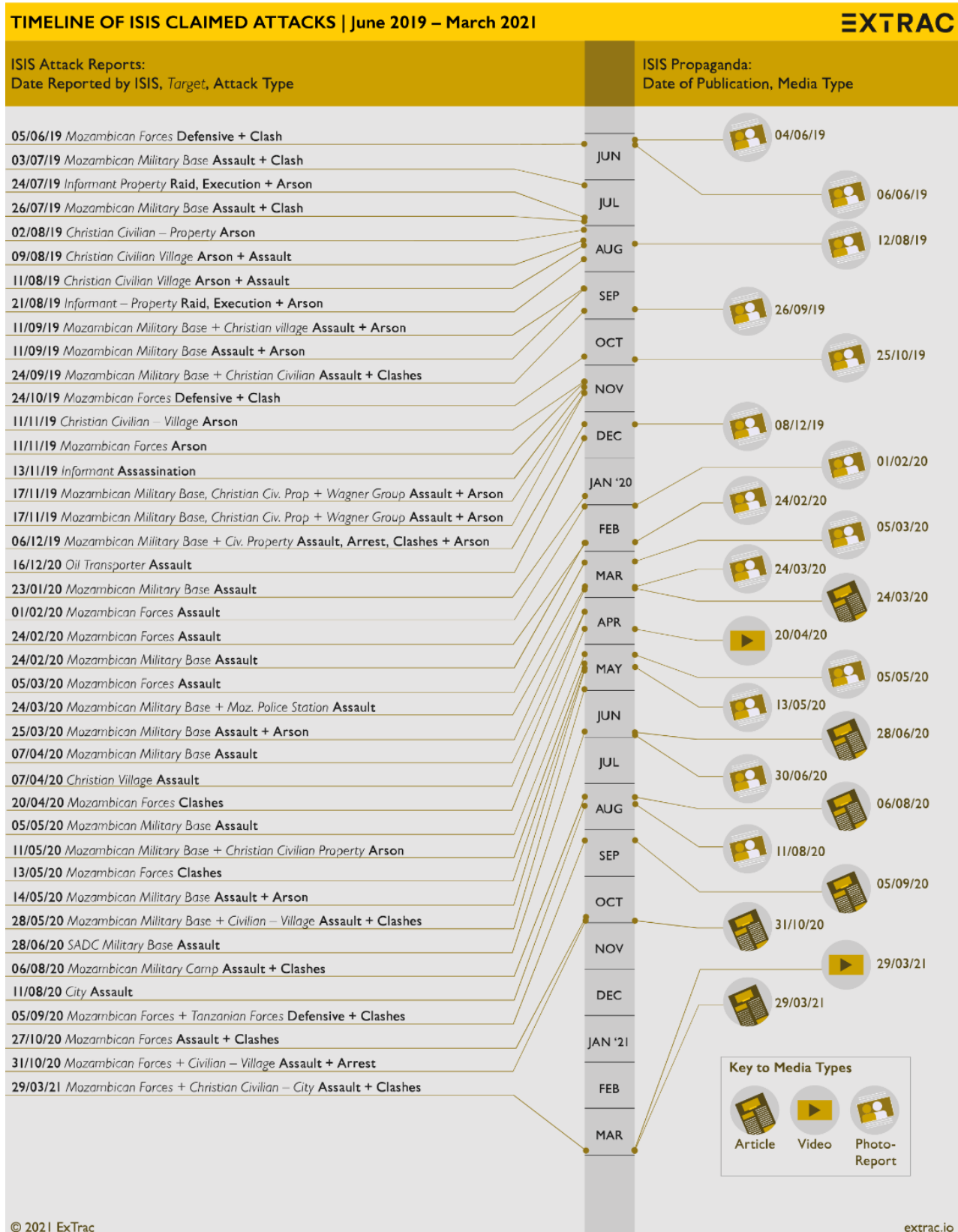


By Islamist militias/violent extremists by week (October 2017-April 2021)



Source: ACLED (Armed Conflict & Event Data Project), as of 30 April 2021. Note: Violence targeting civilians includes violence against civilians, explosions/remote violence, riots and excessive use of force against protesters where civilians are present. It excludes peaceful protest and protest with intervention, as defined by the ACLED Codebook.

Appendix G: Timeline of ISIS-Claimed Attacks (June 2019-March 2021)



## Appendix H: About the International Crisis Group

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The International Crisis Group (Crisis Group) is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, with some 120 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

Crisis Group's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries or regions at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, it produces analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international, regional and national decision-takers. Crisis Group also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a monthly early-warning bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in up to 80 situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

Crisis Group's reports are distributed widely by email and made available simultaneously on its website, [www.crisisgroup.org](http://www.crisisgroup.org). Crisis Group works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analyses and to generate support for its policy prescriptions.

The Crisis Group Board of Trustees – which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media – is directly involved in helping to bring the reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policymakers around the world. Crisis Group is co-chaired by President & CEO of the Fiore Group and Founder of the Radcliffe Foundation, Frank Giustra, as well as by former Foreign Minister of Argentina and Chef de Cabinet to the United Nations Secretary-General, Susana Malcorra.

After President & CEO Robert Malley stood down in January 2021 to become the U.S. Iran envoy, two long-serving Crisis Group staff members assumed interim leadership until the recruitment of his replacement. Richard Atwood, Crisis Group's Chief of Policy, is serving as interim President and Comfort Ero, Africa Program Director, as interim Vice President.

Crisis Group's international headquarters is in Brussels, and the organisation has offices in seven other locations: Bogotá, Dakar, Istanbul, Nairobi, London, New York, and Washington, DC. It has presences in the following locations: Abuja, Addis Ababa, Bahrain, Baku, Bangkok, Beirut, Caracas, Gaza City, Guatemala City, Jerusalem, Johannesburg, Juba, Kabul, Kiev, Manila, Mexico City, Moscow, Seoul, Tbilisi, Toronto, Tripoli, Tunis, and Yangon.

Crisis Group receives financial support from a wide range of governments, foundations, and private sources. Currently Crisis Group holds relationships with the following governmental departments and agencies: Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Austrian Development Agency, Canadian Department of National Defence, Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, European Union Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace, Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, French Development Agency, French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, Global Affairs Canada, Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, Japan International Cooperation Agency, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Principality of Liechtenstein, Luxembourg Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, United Arab Emirates (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy), United Nations Development Programme, United Nations World Food Programme, UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, and the World Bank.

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**June 2021**

## Appendix I: Reports and Briefings on Africa since 2018

### Special Reports and Briefings

*Council of Despair? The Fragmentation of UN Diplomacy*, Special Briefing N°1, 30 April 2019.

*Seven Opportunities for the UN in 2019-2020*, Special Briefing N°2, 12 September 2019.

*Seven Priorities for the New EU High Representative*, Special Briefing N°3, 12 December 2019.

*COVID-19 and Conflict: Seven Trends to Watch*, Special Briefing N°4, 24 March 2020 (also available in French and Spanish).

*A Course Correction for the Women, Peace and Security Agenda*, Special Briefing N°5, 9 December 2020.

*Nineteen Conflict Prevention Tips for the Biden Administration*, United States Briefing N°2, 28 January 2021.

### Africa

*A Tale of Two Councils: Strengthening AU-UN Cooperation*, Africa Report N°279, 25 June 2019.

*The Price of Peace: Securing UN Financing for AU Peace Operations*, Africa Report N°286, 31 January 2020.

*Eight Priorities for the African Union in 2020*, Africa Briefing N°151, 7 February 2020 (also available in French).

*How to Spend It: New EU Funding for African Peace and Security*, Africa Report N°297, 14 January 2021 (also available in French).

*Eight Priorities for the African Union in 2021*, Africa Briefing N°166, 3 February 2021 (also available in French).

### Central Africa

*Seven Priorities for the African Union in 2018*, Africa Briefing N°135, 17 January 2018 (also available in French).

*Electoral Poker in DR Congo*, Africa Report N°259, 4 April 2018 (also available in French).

*Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis: How the Catholic Church Can Promote Dialogue*, Africa Briefing N°138, 26 April 2018 (also available in French).

*Increasing the Stakes in DR Congo's Electoral Poker*, Africa Briefing N°139, 8 June 2018 (also available in French).

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*Chad: Avoiding Confrontation in Miski*, Africa Report N°274, 17 May 2019 (only available in French).

*Making the Central African Republic's Latest Peace Agreement Stick*, Africa Report N°277, 18 June 2019 (also available in French).

*Running Out of Options in Burundi*, Africa Report N°278, 20 June 2019 (also available in French).

*A New Approach for the UN to Stabilise the DR Congo*, Africa Briefing N°148, 4 December 2019.

*Avoiding the Resurgence of Inter-communal Violence in Eastern Chad*, Africa Report N°284, 30 December 2019 (also available in French).

*Averting Proxy Wars in the Eastern DdR Congo and Great Lakes*, Africa Briefing N°150, 23 January 2020 (also available in French and Portuguese).

*A First Step Toward Reform: Ending Burundi's Forced Contribution System*, Africa Briefing N°153, 8 April 2020 (also available in French).

*Mineral Concessions: Avoiding Conflict in DR Congo's Mining Heartland*, Africa Report N°290, 30 June 2020 (also available in French).

*DR Congo: Ending the Cycle of Violence in Ituri*, Africa Report N°292, 15 July 2020 (also available in French).

*Easing Cameroon's Ethno-political Tensions, On and Offline*, Africa Report N°295, 3 December 2020 (also available in French).

*Réduire les tensions électorales en République centrafricaine*, Africa Report N°296, 10 December 2020 (only available in French).

*New Challenges for Chad's Army*, Africa Report N°298, 22 janvier 2021 (only available in French).

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*After Kenya's Leaders Reconcile, a Tough Path Ahead*, Africa Briefing N°136, 13 March 2018.

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*Time for Ethiopia to Bargain with Sidama over Statehood*, Africa Briefing N°146, 4 July 2019.

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*Steering Ethiopia's Tigray Crisis Away from Conflict*, Africa Briefing N°162, 30 October 2020.

*Staving off Violence around Somalia's Elections*, Africa Briefing N°163, 10 November 2020.

*Blunting Al-Shabaab's Impact on Somalia's Elections*, Africa Briefing N°165, 31 December 2020.

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*South Sudan's Other War: Resolving the Insurgency in Equatoria*, Africa Briefing N°169, 25 February 2021.

*Ethiopia's Tigray War: A Deadly, Dangerous Stalemate*, Africa Briefing N°171, 2 April 2021.

## Southern Africa

*Four Conflict Prevention Opportunities for South Africa's Foreign Policy*, Africa Briefing N°152, 27 March 2020.

*All That Glitters is Not Gold: Turmoil in Zimbabwe's Mining Sector*, Africa Report N°294, 24 November 2020.

*How South Africa Can Nudge Zimbabwe toward Stability*, Africa Briefing N°164, 17 December 2020.

## West Africa

*Frontière Niger-Mali : mettre l'outil militaire au service d'une approche politique*, Africa Report N°261, 12 June 2018 (only available in French).

*Stopping Nigeria's Spiralling Farmer-Herder Violence*, Africa Report N°262, 26 July 2018.

*Drug Trafficking, Violence and Politics in Northern Mali*, Africa Report N°267, 13 December 2018 (also available in French).

*Nigeria's 2019 Elections: Six States to Watch*, Africa Report N°268, 21 December 2018.

*Facing the Challenge of the Islamic State in West Africa Province*, Africa Report N°273, 16 May 2019.

*Returning from the Land of Jihad: The Fate of Women Associated with Boko Haram*, Africa Report N°275, 21 May 2019.

*Speaking with the "Bad Guys": Toward Dialogue with Central Mali's Jihadists*, Africa Report N°276 (also available in French), 28 May 2019.

*Getting a Grip on Central Sahel's Gold Rush*, Africa Report N°282, 13 November 2019 (also available in French).

*The Risk of Jihadist Contagion in West Africa*, Africa Briefing N°149, 20 December 2019 (also available in French).

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*Sidelining the Islamic State in Niger's Tillabery*, Africa Report N°289, 3 June 2020 (also available in French).

*What Role for the Multinational Joint Task Force in Fighting Boko Haram?*, Africa Report N°291, 7 July 2020.

*Côte d'Ivoire: An Election Delay for Dialogue*, Africa Briefing N°161, 29 September 2020 (also available in French).

*Reversing Central Mali's Descent into Communal Violence*, Africa Report N°293, 9 November 2020 (also available in French).

*A Course Correction for the Sahel Stabilisation Strategy*, Africa Report N°299, 1 February 2021 (also available in French).

*An Exit from Boko Haram? Assessing Nigeria's Operation Safe Corridor*, Africa Briefing N°170, 19 March 2021.

*South-western Niger: Preventing a New Insurrection*, Africa Report N°301, 29 April 2021 (also available in French).

*Ending Nigeria's Herder-Farmer Crisis: The Livestock Reform Plan*, Africa Report N°302, 4 May 2021.

*Murder in Tillabery: Calming Niger's Emerging Communal Crisis*, Africa Briefing N°172, 28 May 2021 (also available in French)



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