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## Cabo Delgado: Alleged extrajudicial killings of fisherfolk by State forces

● HUMAN RIGHTS COMPLAINT - REQUEST FOR AN IMMEDIATE, INDEPENDENT AND IMPARTIAL INVESTIGATION



### Executive Summary

Civilian fisherfolk are alleged to have been killed by members of the Defence and Security Forces (FDS), in particular by personnel identified as belonging to the Mozambican Navy, in several incidents recorded in Cabo Delgado. Re-

ports indicate occurrences in the Ibo district (8 September 2025), in Quissanga (September 2025) and in Pangane, Macomia (July 2025).

Local contacts concerning the Ibo incident state that approximately 30 civilians were on an island

used seasonally for fishing when three military vessels surrounded the site and opened fire without warning or prior communication. Initial reports indicated at least 18 confirmed deaths and several survivors. Other sources reported a higher death toll (up to 43 confirmed deaths) in related attacks on Maguere Island (Matemo). These discrepancies underscore the need for an independent inquiry to verify casualty figures and the circumstances of the incidents.

Similar accounts include Quissanga, where three civilians were reportedly removed from a boat by naval personnel and subsequently found dead, and the circulation of imagery from Pangane (Macomia) in July 2025 that allegedly shows fisherfolk being

executed by armed actors identified by witnesses as naval personnel.

Taken together, these incidents indicate a possible pattern of lethal and unlawful use of force against unarmed civilians. If confirmed, they would constitute serious violations of International Human Rights Law (IHRL) and International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

This complaint is submitted for urgent action and calls on national and international institutions to activate their mechanisms and open an immediate, independent and impartial inquiry into the allegations, to ensure protection for affected communities and to prevent further violations.

## ALLEGATIONS AND REPORTED FACTUAL FRAMEWORK

### Matemo, Ibo — Maguere Island (2 / 8 September 2025)

- **Reported facts:** Two civilian boats were on Maguere Island (a seasonal fishing site) when three military vessels surrounded the location from different directions and opened fire without addressing those present. The attack — reported between 14:00 and 17:00 — resulted in a significant number of deaths and injuries.
- **Casualty figures:** Sources differ. Witness accounts and some reports indicate at least 18 confirmed deaths and around 7 survivors (several seriously injured). Other reports and follow-up coverage cite a higher toll, up to 43 confirmed deaths among fishers and fish traders. This variation highlights the need for independent verification.
- **Witness statements:** Survivors and community members report that many civilians were killed on the spot while others fled. Witnesses describe military personnel moving to other parts of the island after the shooting to check for survivors. Several victims were identified as members of the same Matemo family.
- **Source:** MOZ24H (11 September 2025) and community testimonies.

### Quissanga — Mefunvo (September 2025)

- **Reported facts:** Community monitors collected testimony indicating that **three civilians** (a woman and two young men identified as Momad and Ibad) were taken from a boat by Mozambican Navy personnel. Days later, their bodies were found bearing gunshot wounds. The fate of other passengers on the same vessel remains unknown (possible enforced disappearances).
- **Source:** Testimonies gathered by civil society monitors.

## Macomia — Pangane (July 2025)

- **Reported facts:** A video circulated on social media allegedly shows fisherfolk being executed by individuals whom witnesses identify as members of the Mozambican Navy. The footage — widely shared and archived by civil society organisations — shows armed men firing at civilians and bodies falling beside boats. Local reports indicate a very large number of victims. No official explanation has been provided by the competent authorities.
- **Source:** Archived social media videos and civil society monitoring.

## Demands and immediate measures requested

1. **Immediate independent inquiry:** Launch, without delay, an independent, impartial and credible investigation into all reported incidents (Ibo/Matemo, Quissanga/Mefunvo, Pangane/Macomia and any related events), including forensic preservation and analysis of physical and digital evidence.
2. **Accountability:** Ensure full judicial accountability for those responsible, if unlawful acts are established, including prosecution for serious offences under IHRL and IHL where applicable.
3. **Protection and assistance:** Provide urgent protection and assistance to affected communities and survivors — including medical care, psychosocial support, and adequate compensation for affected families.
4. **Clarification on detentions and disappearances:** Locate and identify missing persons, publish official detention records, and adopt immediate measures to prevent further enforced disappearances.
5. **Transparency and communication:** Establish clear and transparent channels of communication between authorities and affected communities to reduce fear, provide reliable information, and rebuild public trust.
6. **Review rules of engagement:** Review and strengthen the rules of engagement and operational conduct of the Defence and Security Forces (FDS), with mandatory training and oversight mechanisms to ensure compliance with IHRL and IHL.

## Sources (selected)

- MOZ24H — “Militares transformam pescadores em alvos de guerra” (11 September 2025).
- MOZTIMES — “Bodies of Fishermen Allegedly Killed by Mozambican Military Found in Coastal Villages of Cabo Delgado” (22 July 2025).
- Social media videos — audiovisual material widely circulated in July 2025 alleging executions in Pangane (Macomia). These files have been archived and subjected to preliminary verification by civil society monitors.
- Testimonies collected by local community monitors and civil society organisations.

## Observations on Evidence and Verification

- Some allegations are corroborated by eyewitness testimony and audiovisual material archived by civil society monitors. However, casualty figures vary across sources. Independent forensic investigation and investigative work are required to verify the numbers, identify victims, and establish the chain of events.
- Given the gravity of the allegations and the risk of further violations, we emphasise the urgency of immediate protective measures for affected communities and witnesses while investigations proceed.

## Legal Summary

If confirmed, the incidents reported herein constitute serious violations of both Mozambican and international law. The Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique guarantees the right to life (Article 40) and the right to physical and moral integrity (Article 41), and imposes on the Defence and Security Forces the duty to act in accordance with legality and respect for fundamental rights (Article 59). At the infra-constitutional level, the Penal Code (Law No. 24/2019) criminalises homicide and extrajudicial executions, imposing individual

criminal responsibility. Under international law, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 6) and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Article 4) protect the right to life, while the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Additional Protocol II prohibit deliberate attacks against civilians in situations of armed conflict. Non-compliance with these norms places an immediate legal duty on the State to investigate, prosecute those responsible and provide reparation to victims.



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**MISSÃO:**

*Inspirar e impulsionar ações para proteger os direitos humanos, fortalecer a democracia e promover a justiça.*

**MISSION:**

*Inspiring and driving actions to protect human rights, strengthen democracy, and promote justice.*

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