

MOZAMBIQUE News reports & clippings

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+ Fighting continues

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IS Palma claims are fake news

Islamic State (IS) claimed credit for the attack on Palma, but the claim is clearly fake and, indeed, it seems likely that IS was never in contact with the insurgents about Palma.

The IS-aligned AMAQ news agency issued a statement 29 March claiming that IS had attacked Palma, and destroyed government offices and banks - which by then had been in the international media. And it included the photo below:



Enlarging the upper left corner of the picture gives the location, Mocimboa da Praia.



Jasmine Opperman (@Jasminechic00), senior researcher at ACLED, says "the photo is not from Palma, but from Mocimboa da Praia in 2020. A giveaway is the foliage. It looks like they took the photo at the road close to Mocimboa da Praia airport." AMAQ has also released a video said to be Palma, but that, too, is Mocimboa da Praia.

Indeed, in attacks over the past year, one of the first things destroyed has been mobile telephone towers and equipment, to prevent communications with the outside, and that happened in Palma. Instead of trying to gain publicity, insurgents seem to be trying to prevent it.

The insurgents did make links with IS in 2019 and sent out films taken on mobile telephones, including some with insurgents flying the black IS flag. But this appears to have ended more than six months ago.

Fighting continues after organised attack

Fighting continues in Palma. As in all of its raids, the insurgents do not initially try to hold towns, but drift away as the military response increases. But there are still insurgents in Palma and still the sound of gunfire. On Tuesday afternoon (30 Mar) the Defence Ministry took a group of journalists to Palma to show the town was in government hands, but instead were forced leave after 30 minutes when the helicopter came under insurgent fire.

Much of the town is empty and abandoned or destroyed. There is still no telecommunications, making it difficult to obtain details.

Fresh troops have been flown in from Maputo and the defence forces have launched an operation to identify everyone in Palma and the reasons for their presence, to try to identify remaining insurgents. But that raises the danger of the army harassing innocent civilians, as has happened in the past.

The UN migration agency IOM reported that at 17h00 on Wednesday 31 March nearly 8,200 displaced people had been identified, with 3,600 in Mueda and 1,200 in Nangade. Many thousands more are in transit or hiding in forests. In a statement Wednesday afternoon, OCHA said "Many more people remain displaced inside of Palma - including thousands who have reportedly gathered near the Afungi complex - where the security situation remains volatile." A second boatload of 1400 Total workers is expected to arrive in Pemba on Thursday.

The 24 March attack was well planned and coordinated. Insurgents robbed three international banks and a WFP warehouse, taking 90 tonnes of food. They seized at least 80 civilian vehicles, including two fuel bowsers, and stole army munitions in the highly-coordinated attack. This should keep the insurgents supplied for the near future. (Intelyse 30 March)

People who fled to Nangage told MediaFax (30 March) that killing was not random, and insurgents targeted civil servants. Similarly, the attack on the Amarula Hotel was not to attack foreigners, but because senior government staff, including the district administrator, had taken refuge there.

Friendly fire: Six people were killed and more wounded when a helicopter of the Mozambican armed forces fired on a lorry transporting soldiers and civilians away from Palma. (@Verdade)

Three members of the UK's elite military regiment, the Special Air Service (SAS) went to Cabo Delgado hunting for a British man, Phil Mawer, killed after a convoy from the Amarula hotel came under attack from militants. (The Times, London, 31 Mar)

Dyck Advisory Group (DAG) whose contract with government is ending 6 April has joined with one of the largest private security companies, GardaWorld, according to Africa Intelligence (31 March)

UN Links:

OCHA Reliefweb - Mozambique – Attacks In Palma District, Flash update No. 3 (31 March) <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/mozambique/flash-update/11S9K6yaXfU9LB8KiBF9yH/> **Flash Update No.2** (30 Mar 2021)

<https://reliefweb.int/report/mozambique/mozambique-attacks-palma-district-flash-update-no2-last-updated-30-mar-2021>

IOM Displacement: <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/mozambique---emergency-tracking-tool-report---41-27-31-march-2021> and <https://displacement.iom.int/content/movement-alert>

Experts debate:

Is this a Salafi-Jihadi insurgency, and what is the role of IS?

The United States on 10 March labelled the insurgents "ISIS-Mozambique" and called them a Foreign Terrorist Organization. Many media reports have referred to an "IS attack" on Palma. But this is also challenged, with greater stress put on internal grievances and questions raised about the IS links. Here we report on four papers debating the issue.

Note there are naming problems. I call them "insurgents", they call themselves "al Shabaab" and this is also used by local people, Heyen-Dubé and Rands (below) call them "VE" - violent extremists, and Estelle and Darden (below) called them "IS-M" (Islamic State in Mozambique). Similarly I use "IS" (Islamic State) while others use "ISIS" (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria or Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant). All versions are used in the quotes below.

"Combating the Islamic State's Spread in Africa" by Emily Estelle and Jessica Trisko Darden, American Enterprise Institute (AEI). <http://bit.ly/AEI-IS-M>

"The global Salafi-jihadi movement, which includes al Qaeda and the Islamic State, is spreading in Africa. An Islamic State-linked group in northern Mozambique is the latest case of a Salafi-jihadi group co-opting and expanding a local conflict."

"The Islamic State increasingly relies on its African affiliates to demonstrate its continued existence and expansion as it suffers losses in the Middle East." Also "IS-M represents an Islamic State foothold where its rival al Qaeda is not present." The paper argues that "IS-M is on track to establish a permanent base for future attacks inside Mozambique and beyond."

The paper stresses that "the extremist ideology that has been grafted onto local grievances in Cabo Delgado. ... Cabo Delgado's residents have historically been marginalized, creating grievances against the national government in the capital." Problems include political marginalization, lack of jobs leading to delayed social advancement, and corruption and cronyism.

"International conglomerates' activities have 'squeezed out' Muslim populations from their ancestral lands. ... Tighter controls by the state and private businesses have contributed to loss of revenue from artisanal mining and illegal logging. Disproportionate use of force by police and private security to enforce these controls contributes to popular dissatisfaction." The report calls for an international effort to "pursue a long-term resolution to the under-lying grievances."

"A Salafi-Jihadi Insurgency in Cabo Delgado?" by Thomas Heyen-Dubé & Richard Rands, University of Oxford <http://bit.ly/Salafi-Jihadi>

Al Shabaab "is not a Salafi-Jihadi movement, and not currently connected in any impactful way to IS," argue Heyen-Dubé and Rands. "The reality is that IS has no command-and-control ability over the insurgency, has not shared technical or tactical knowhow, and cannot provide training or weapons to VE [violent extremists, al Shabaab]."

"VE are not Salafi-Jihadis as they do not share their ideological and theological understanding of the world. ... VE have extremely limited links to the international Salafi-Jihadi nebula. ... their struggle is best understood as a challenge to authorities to secure increased political and religious representation, and socio- economic benefits in CD [Cabo Delgado]."

Al Shabaab "have shown themselves to be resilient, adaptable, and capable of rapid expansion - within specific geographical boundaries - by tapping into widespread disenfranchisement with the central government, among the local youth. VE have created a simple, enticing narrative for many young men in CD, by expertly playing on socio-economic deprivations, ethnic resentment, and generational clashes, presenting these complex issues as the product of 'degenerate' and un-Islamic governance."

"The youthful leadership of the group was, in effect, accusing established religious elites of propagating a heretical form of Islam for their own financial benefit [and] they accused Sufi clerics of pandering to Frelimo elites at the expense of their religious duty."

"Since the movement's inception, its ideology has been remarkably unsophisticated. Unlike Salafi insurgencies, they have not published pamphlets outlining their ideology and the rationale for their actions."

"Though ideology plays a part, the primary drivers of recruitment are socio- economic hardships, the pervasive marginalisation of youth from Mwani communities, and a generational clash between young people in CD and established religious authorities."

"The jihadi insurgency in Mozambique: origins, nature and beginning" by Eric Morier-Genoud published last July in *Journal of Eastern African Studies* is now available free on <https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2020.1789271>

"The insurgency builds on a Mozambican religious sect whose leadership was primarily Mozambican. It therefore seems difficult to sustain an argument for an 'external invasion' or even an 'import' that led to the insurgency," writes Morier-Genoud.

Al Shabaab started as an "Islamist sect" around 2007. "Instead of trying to change the political order, they withdrew from it, and cut themselves off from society, so as to apply sharia rule for themselves. They demanded that their members not engage with the secular systems of justice, health and education. ... The sect had nothing to do with the Sufi Muslim majority of Cabo Delgado or the Wahhabi Islamic Council of Mozambique (CISLAMO), who opposed the sect from the start."

From its start mainstream Muslim leaders lobbied the state to repress the sect. "I suggest that the sect shifted its overall strategy after being at the receiving end of increased opposition and repression by mainstream Muslim organizations and the state - with a tipping point reached around 2016" when al Shabaab shifted to armed jihadism.

"Al-Shabaab has indeed linked up with ISIS, but it is doubtful that these factors radically and definitively altered the nature of the insurgents." There is nothing to "indicate a take-over of Al-Shabaab by ISIS". Indeed Morier-Genoud points to a growing "divergences between al-Shabaab and ISIS" from mid-2020.

There are a set of fundamental differences relating "to religious ideas and practices (Al-Shabaab are Quranists while ISIS is not), race and nationalism (ISIS is primarily Arab), as well as strategy and power/control." Quranists believe that the Quran is the sole source of religious law and guidance in Islam and reject the authority of the Hadith and Sunnah. Finally, "the insurgents continue to call themselves Al-Shabaab when addressing the local population and that they insist they are locals."

A more complex reality in Cabo Delgado, by Joseph Hanlon, New Frame 24 March <https://www.newframe.com/the-lie-of-islamist-terrorists-in-cabo-delgado/> Full text below, written before the Palma attack.

Labelling matters: A more complex reality in Cabo Delgado

In the Mozambican province wracked by a violent insurgency, the convenient labelling of those rising up against the predatory elite paints a picture that is far from reality.

When the uprising started in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique's northernmost province, in 2017, the insurgents used the only weapons they had: their machetes. And they cut off the heads of local elites whom they accused of being allied to the leaders of the ruling Mozambique Liberation Front (Frelimo) in stealing the mineral wealth.

Forty years ago, there was another civil war in Mozambique, in which the Mozambique National Resistance (Renamo) committed atrocities such as burning people alive in buses. But Renamo had been trained by the apartheid military, many of whom were believing members of the Dutch Reformed Church, which was firmly supporting apartheid. Yet no matter that the trainers thought they were doing the work of God to defend white rule and how cruel the Renamo atrocities were, those who perpetrated them were never called "Christian terrorists". Yet we insist on calling the insurgents in Cabo Delgado "Islamist terrorists".

Labels are important and shape how we look at civil wars. We try to label the opposition with the current global enemy. Renamo was said to be fighting "global communism" so as not to be accused of defending white rule. Now the Mozambican government is said to be fighting "global Islamists" and not protecting an elite that refuses to share the ruby, mineral and gas wealth with local people. Thus the labels shape how we see the war.

Save the Children Mozambique issued a press release on 16 March about children "murdered by armed men" – carefully not labelling the insurgents. But most media reports of the press release called them Islamist and stressed links to the Islamic State. All civil wars are cruel and brutal. Amnesty International accused the insurgents of war crimes and "heinous acts of violence" on 2 March. The organisation and others use the local name for the insurgents, al-Shabaab, which simply means the youth (and has no links to other al-Shabaabs).

And Amnesty International also stressed that "al-Shabaab is primarily a homegrown armed group fighting over local issues, an insurgency sparked by the long-term underinvestment in the Muslim-majority province by the central government. The group uses jihadist ideology as an organising tool. While Islamist ideologies have been growing in Cabo Delgado for decades, the movement did not

gain traction until the arrival of resource extraction industries that provide little subsequent benefit for the local communities.” Most local researchers support that position.

Grievance and outside intervention

Fifteen years ago I was the co-author of an Open University (United Kingdom) course and its textbook, *Civil War, Civil Peace*. One key point was that all civil wars have two things: a grievance serious enough that people feel they must kill to save their own lives, and outside intervention. In Cabo Delgado, the grievance is marginalisation and growing poverty and inequality as Frelimo oligarchs and the mining and gas companies do not share the wealth.

Outside intervention to support al-Shabaab has included the Islamic State, which provided some publicity as well as support, including training in 2019 and 2020 but apparently not in the past six months. On the government side, outside support came first from a Russian private military company, the Wagner Group, and then its South African counterpart, the Dyck Advisory Group.

United States “green berets” arrived on 15 March to train Mozambican marines. Portugal promises to send trainers, and the European Union and South Africa are also looking to provide support. On 10 March, the US formally labelled al-Shabaab, which it calls Islamic State of Iraq and Syria – Mozambique (Isis-Mozambique), as a foreign terrorist organisation.

All of the sudden support is not to assist Mozambique but to fight the new global enemy – Islam and the Islamic State. At the press conference on 11 March, John T Godfrey said that “we have to confront Isis in Africa”. His title is acting special envoy for the Global Coalition to Defeat Isis, which means his job depends on fighting it, and Mozambique is just another place to send troops as part of that war.

But the other speaker at the US press conference, Michael Gonzales, said that “addressing the socioeconomic drivers of the threat, countering Isis messaging, and providing greater economic opportunity and resilience of the community so that the attraction to violent extremism is lessened” was essential in Cabo Delgado. His title is deputy assistant secretary in the US Bureau of African Affairs, which shows he has a different perspective.

Pushing a narrative

The Frelimo leadership in Mozambique is pushing the foreign terrorism line very hard. And it does not want anyone suggesting that the insurgency is linked to the greed of the Frelimo elite, marginalisation of youths and Muslims, and growing poverty and inequality. In private, Frelimo is very clear: it wants support from individual countries and private military contractors that will provide military help and parrot the message of Islamic State terrorism.

In particular, Frelimo does not want the involvement of international organisations such as the Southern African Development Community, the EU or United Nations, which are big enough to issue reports pointing out the root causes of the insurgency. Mozambique wants humanitarian aid, but again it wants to be in charge. The UN has been waiting for more than four months for visas for 57 humanitarian experts for Cabo Delgado, UN resident coordinator in Mozambique Myrta Kaulard said on 5 March.

Of course religion plays a role in the war. Most, but not all, of the insurgents are Muslim and the original organisers are from Cabo Delgado, including local fundamentalist Muslim preachers. President Filipe Nyusi is from Cabo Delgado and is from the Makonde ethnic group and Catholic. Nyusi has had strong support from Pope Francis, who made an unprecedented visit to Mozambique during the 2019 presidential election campaign when Nyusi was standing against a Muslim candidate, Ossufo Momade of Renamo. And on 11 February the pope withdrew the outspoken Catholic bishop of Pemba, Luis Fernando Lisboa, whom Nyusi had publicly criticised because he was standing up for local people.

It is a nasty war on all sides. Amnesty International accused the Dyck Advisory Group of war crimes, including bombing civilians by apparently using Syria-style barrel bombs made from cooking gas canisters and dropped from helicopters on houses.

And Amnesty International cited government forces for war crimes. The most extreme was in Quisanga in March and April 2020, when the “permanent secretary’s house would come to be known to villagers as a place where government security forces took women to be raped, and men detained, beaten and, in some cases, summarily executed as well. Six witnesses described a mass grave behind the home, a ‘big hole’ under the trees, where people would be taken to be shot and dumped directly in the pit.”

Nyusi is commander in chief and is in much more direct control of his forces than the Islamic State is of al-Shabaab. And Nyusi is Catholic and the pope has intervened in the war. If we insist on citing “Islamic terrorism” because of the role of the Islamic State, should we be calling what happened in Quisanga “Christian terrorism”?

Hidden truths

In fact, neither label is correct. But again, labels are important. The 1980s civil war was in reality a Cold War proxy war, with the US backing apartheid South Africa to build up Renamo to fight the “communists” backed by the Soviet Union. Now Islam is the enemy and the US is back, fighting the Islamic State on Mozambican soil with the willing participation of Portugal and, probably, France and South Africa.

But the insurgency will not be stopped militarily. As Gonzales and many others stress, Islamist militants recruit young men with no jobs and who see no future; they stress that the government is stealing their future. Creating thousands of jobs for the poorly educated youth of Cabo Delgado would end the war, but that requires the gas companies and the Frelimo oligarchs who rule Cabo Delgado to use some of their profits to fund that job creation, and so far they have shown no interest. They would prefer the Islamic State to be blamed and that someone else fights the war.

The French company Total is developing a \$20 billion gas liquefaction plant on the Afungi peninsula. Insurgents reached the gates of the project on 1 January and Total pulled out its staff. It told Mozambique it would only return when the Mozambique government could guarantee a 25km-radius secure zone around Afungi. That looks as if Total is happy to do gas production if the war can be kept out of sight. It has experience of this in Nigeria, where it has offshore wells and in the Niger Delta an insurgency has been going on for decades.

That is why labelling is so important. If this is treated as “Islamist terrorism” from the Islamic State outside of Mozambique, then Cabo Delgado will become like the Niger Delta and the war will continue indefinitely – with the gas companies in secure zones. But if jobs were created and marginalisation reduced, the war could be stopped. Sadly, it looks as if the gas companies, the Frelimo elite and the US building a new cold war would rather fight mythical global Islamist terrorists.
Joseph Hanlon

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Important external links

Covid-19 daily updated data <https://www.facebook.com/miguel.de.brito1> and <https://covid19.ins.gov.mz/documentos-em-pdf/boletins-diarios/>

Daily flood reports - <http://bit.ly/Moz-flood21>

Cyclone trackers, <https://www.cyclocane.com/> and <https://www.metoc.navy.mil/jtwc/jtwc.html>

Cabo Ligado weekly report on civil war <http://bit.ly/CaboLigado>

Previous editions of this newsletter: <http://bit.ly/MozNews2021> and bit.ly/MozNews2020

Downloadable books: <http://bit.ly/Hanlon-books> Election data: <http://bit.ly/MozEIData>
My Mozambique archive: <http://bit.ly/Mozamb>

Cabo Delgado

Archive with reports, detailed maps, and census data <https://bit.ly/Moz-CDg>

Special reports on the war

Evolution of the war: global vs local. 27 Feb 2020 <http://bit.ly/CDelgadoOrigins>
Religion is shaping Cabo Delgado civil war. 30 April 2020 <https://bit.ly/CDelgadoReligion>
Intensifying argument over roots of war. 28 June 2020 <https://bit.ly/Moz-492>
Are the drums of war silencing any hope of peace? 26 July 2020 <http://bit.ly/Moz-496>
A history of violence presages the insurgency. 13 August 2020 <http://bit.ly/Moz-498>
Military & economic intervention. 3 Sept 2020 <https://bit.ly/CDelgadoIntervene>

Mozambique heroin transit trade

English - LSE - 2018 - <http://bit.ly/Moz-heroin>
Portuguese - CIP- 2018 - <http://bit.ly/HeroinaPT>
2001 first article- *Metical* - English and Portuguese <https://bit.ly/MozHeroin2001>

Gas for development?

Gas_for_development_or_just_for_money?_2015 <bit.ly/MozGasEng>
Gás_para_desenvolvimento_ou_apenas_dinheiro?_2015 <bit.ly/MozGasPt>

Background reading

Special reports

Social protection report - 2017 Mozambique - <http://bit.ly/MozSocPro>
Special report on four poverty surveys: <bit.ly/MozPoverty>
Minimum wage and exchange rates 1996-2018 -- <http://bit.ly/MinWage18>

\$2bn secret debt - in English

Kroll - Full report on \$2bn debt - <http://bit.ly/Kroll-Moz>
Kroll report summary - <http://bit.ly/Kroll-sum>
Key points of Mozambique parliament report - Nov 2016 - <http://bit.ly/MozAR-debt-En>
Following the donor-designed path to Mozambique's \$2.2 bn debt - <http://bit.ly/3WQ-hanlon>

In Portuguese:

Parliamentary Report on the Secret Debt (complete) <bit.ly/MozAR-debt>
2018 Constitution - <http://bit.ly/2KF588T>

Election study collaboration: We have detailed election data from 1999 through 2014 and are inviting scholars to use this data collaboratively. <http://bit.ly/MozEIData>
Election newsletters are on <http://bit.ly/2H066Kg>

Nine books by Joseph Hanlon can be downloaded, free: <http://bit.ly/Hanlon-books>

Bangladesh confronts climate change (2016)
Chickens and beer: A recipe for agricultural growth in Mozambique (2014) is on <https://bit.ly/Chickens-Beer>
Há Mais Bicycletas – mas há desenvolvimento? (2008)
Moçambique e as grandes cheias de 2000 (2001)
Mozambique and the Great Flood of 2000 (2001)
Paz Sem Benefício: Como o FMI Bloqueia a Reconstrução (1997)
Peace Without Profit: How the IMF Blocks Rebuilding (1996)
Mozambique: Who Calls the Shots (1991)
Mozambique: The Revolution Under Fire (1984)
Apartheid's 2nd Front (1986) <available shortly>

These are still available for sale:

Galinhas e cerveja: uma receita para o crescimento (2014) (free in English)
Zimbabwe takes back its land (2013)
Just Give Money to the Poor: The Development Revolution from the Global South (2010)
Do bicycles equal development in Mozambique? (2008) (free in Portuguese)
Beggar Your Neighbours: Apartheid Power in Southern Africa (1986)

Mozambique media websites, English:

Club of Mozambique (free): <http://clubofmozambique.com/>

Zitamar (paywall): <http://zitamar.com/>

Mozambique media websites, Portuguese (all with partial paywall):

Notícias: www.jornalnoticias.co.mz

O País: www.opais.co.mz

@Verdade: <http://www.verdade.co.mz>

Carta de Moçambique <https://cartamz.com>

Mozambique think tanks and pressure groups, Portuguese:

Centro de Integridade Pública: CIP <https://cipmoz.org/>

Observatório do Meio Rural: OMR <https://omrmz.org/>

Instituto de Estudos Sociais e Económicos: IESE <https://www.iese.ac.mz/>

Centro Para Democracia e Desenvolvimento CDD <https://cddmoz.org/> (some CDD in English)

Fórum de Monitoria do Orçamento - FMO (the main group following the \$2 bn secret debt - now run by CDD) <http://www.fmo.org.mz>
