



VIOLENT CLASHES IN MOGOVOLAS:

PRELIMINARY MONITORING REPORT ON DEATHS, DETENTIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS



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Contextualization

Within the scope of its permanent mission of human rights monitoring, documentation and advocacy, Plataforma DECIDE conducted a field mission to the Administrative Post of Iuluti, located in Mogovolas District, Nampula Province, Northern Mozambique, with a specific focus on the informal mining area of Marraca.

The Marraca area is characterized by intense artisanal mining activities, involving mainly local residents, while also attracting individuals from different regions of the country in search of livelihoods. The socio-economic vulnerability of the population, combined with the absence of a structured, transparent and participatory framework for the management of mining activities, has contributed to recurring tensions between communities and State authorities.

It was in this context that, on 28 December 2025, large-scale violent clashes occurred, resulting in deaths, serious injuries, arbitrary detentions and disappearances, whose human, social and psychological consequences continue to deeply affect local communities.

The DECIDE mission aimed to collect first-hand information from victims, relatives of victims and witnesses, document the facts observed on the ground, assess the human and social impact of the events and alert the competent authorities to the seriousness of the reported situations.

This monitoring was carried out in a context of generalized fear, lack of official information and risks to witnesses, which necessarily imposes limitations on the immediate verification of all facts.

2. Monitoring Methodology

Plataforma DECIDE adopted a qualitative human rights monitoring methodology, appropriate to contexts of extreme violence, community fear, risk of reprisals and limited access to official information.

The methodology included the following components:

2.1. Direct and Confidential Interviews

Face-to-face and confidential interviews were conducted with 10 witnesses, all of whom were relatives of victims, distributed as follows:

- 4 relatives of deceased victims
- 6 relatives of injured and/or detained persons

The decision to interview close relatives was due to the fact that many victims were deceased, disappeared or deprived of liberty, as well as the prevailing climate of fear that prevents eyewitnesses from coming forward.

2.2. Protection of Sources

All testimonies were fully anonymized, with sources identified only by alphanumeric codes (e.g., FAM-01, FAM-02, TEST-01), as an essential protection measure against reprisals.

2.3. Collection of Complementary Evidence

Videos, photographs and audio recordings were collected and analyzed, enabling triangulation of information, identification of consistent patterns and reinforcement of factual credibility.

2.4. Follow-up Contact

DECIDE maintained follow-up contact with victims and relatives, monitoring developments including the discovery of new bodies, subsequent detentions and the deterioration of the health condition of injured persons.

3. Causal Context of the Clashes and Escalation of Violence

3.1. Pre-existing Informal Practices and Economic Negotiations

According to multiple convergent testimonies, the violent events did not occur in isolation but were embedded in a pre-existing context of recurring informal practices between police officers deployed to the Marraca mining area and groups of artisanal miners.

Sources reported that police officers repeatedly negotiated directly with miners, demanding or accepting monetary payments ranging from 50 to 100 meticais, paid either per group or per individual miner. These payments allowed the temporary continuation of mining activities, avoiding immediate repressive actions.

Such practices reportedly intensified during bi-weekly or monthly rotation periods, when some police groups collected payments before leaving the area.

3.2. Breakdown of the Informal Arrangement and Initial Deaths

Witnesses indicated that a first police group collected payments from miners and withdrew from the area without transmitting this information to the following group.

When the second group arrived, unaware that payments had already been made, it initiated a forced dispersal of miners. During this operation, two miners were fatally shot, triggering immediate reactions from some miners present.

In the course of this reaction, one police officer lost his life, marking an abrupt escalation of violence.

3.3. Uncontrolled Gunfire and Collapse of Local Order

Following the death of the police officer, testimonies describe a situation of total loss of operational control, with indiscriminate gunfire by police forces on the ground. The absence of effective command and containment protocols led to intense clashes.

Due to the numerical superiority of the miners, they temporarily repelled police forces, resulting in a scenario of extreme violence, fear and widespread chaos.

3.4. Subsequent Military-Type Intervention

According to testimonies, after the initial clashes, the management of the mining company contacted district authorities, following which a military-type expedition was deployed.

Witnesses reported that upon arrival in Marraca, there was no visible attempt at prior assessment, mediation or distinction between those involved in the clashes and civilian residents. The intervening force allegedly opened fire in a generalised manner, hitting miners, civilians, women and children, including residents not involved in the initial events.

3.5. Modes of Death and Extreme Levels of Violence

Beyond deaths caused by gunfire, witnesses reported that some victims were killed by other means, revealing extreme levels of violence. At least one victim was reportedly decapitated, while others were killed with bladed weapons, allegedly in situations where gunfire did not hit them.

These accounts indicate practices incompatible with any legitimate law-enforcement operation and suggest acts of extreme violence beyond institutional control.

3.6. Alleged Existence of a Mass Grave and Concealment of Bodies

Several independent testimonies collected by Plataforma DECIDE refer to the alleged existence of a mass grave, located outside the immediate Marraca area, specifically in Naholoko locality, Iulute Administrative Post.

According to sources, bodies of victims killed during the clashes were allegedly removed from the scene and deposited at this location, with the purpose of concealing the real number of deaths and eliminating evidence. These acts reportedly occurred after the armed intervention, when the area was already under State control.

Witnesses stated that the removal of bodies occurred without any legal procedures, formal identification or communication with families, hindering victim identification and aggravating the suffering of relatives, many of whom continue searching for missing family members.

The alleged existence of a mass grave constitutes an extremely serious indication, potentially amounting to concealment of corpses, destruction of evidence and violation of the constitutional duty to effectively investigate violent deaths, requiring urgent, independent and technically appropriate verification by competent authorities.

4. Accounts of Deaths, Injuries, Detentions and Human Impact

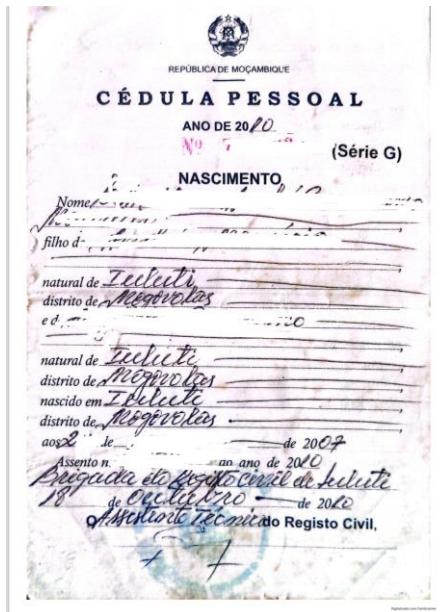
4.1. Number of Deaths and Continuous Discovery of Bodies

Initially, relatives of victims notified local radio stations of 13 deaths. In subsequent days, however, new bodies continued to be discovered daily, leading community members to report significantly higher numbers, exceeding 38 deaths.

The continuous discovery of bodies demonstrates that the actual number of fatalities remains undetermined, reinforcing the urgency of an independent investigation. Allegations were also raised regarding the removal of bodies from the clash site and the existence of a mass grave, raising serious concerns about concealment of corpses and destruction of evidence.

4.2. Account of a Deceased Victim's Relative — FAM-01

Source FAM-01 reported that their relative left home on the morning of 28 December to work in the mine in order to generate income for family subsistence. The victim did not return, and the family received confirmation of death the following day. The body presented severe injuries, including deep wounds to the neck region. The victim was the main provider for the household, leaving the family in a situation of extreme economic and emotional vulnerability.



4.3. Allegations of Executions and Abduction of Civilians — FAM-01

The same source reported extremely serious allegations of the temporary abduction of two minor twins and a pregnant woman, allegedly forced to witness executions of civilians and later released under threat of death should they return to the community or report the facts.

4.4. Disappearance Following Gunshot Injury — FAM-02

Source FAM-02 reported that their relative was shot in the leg during the clashes and sought medical assistance in the city of Nampula, remaining disappeared for several days. Detention was



later confirmed at the Second Police Station of the Police of the Republic of Mozambique, without clear official information being provided to the family.

4.5. Eyewitness Testimony of a Climate of Terror — TEST-01

Source TEST-01 stated that they witnessed three deaths, one disappearance and four serious injuries, describing a scenario of generalised terror, affecting men, women and children, with long-lasting psychological impact on the community.

Affected communities currently live under permanent fear, insecurity and uncertainty, having lost family providers and experiencing deep psychological trauma and growing distrust toward State institutions.

5. Injured Persons, Detainees and Violations of Fundamental Rights

During the monitoring, Plataforma DECIDE gathered consistent information indicating that several individuals were shot during the incursion and did not receive immediate assistance from local State entities.

In the absence of official assistance, family members transported the injured to health centres and later to Nampula Central Hospital. However, some of these injured individuals were removed from hospital before completing medical treatment and transferred to the Central Command and



subsequently to the Central Prison.

These individuals are currently deprived of liberty without adequate medical assistance, without access to a lawyer and without contact with family members, constituting cumulative violations of the following constitutional rights:

- Article 40 – Right to Life: the State has a duty to protect the lives of persons under its custody.
- Article 56 – Physical and Moral Integrity: denial of medical care constitutes cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.
- Article 64 – Liberty and Security: deprivation of liberty without legal guarantees constitutes arbitrary detention.
- Article 65 – Guarantees of the Accused: access to legal defence is a fundamental right.
- Article 89 – Right to Health: the State must ensure adequate medical care, especially for detained persons.

These practices constitute multiple, continuous and aggravated violations of fundamental rights.

6. Conclusion and Institutional Alert

The information gathered by Plataforma DECIDE reveals serious, consistent and convergent indications of grave human rights violations occurring in the context of the clashes in the Marraca mining area.

Testimonies point to a pattern of conduct marked by excessive and lethal use of force, large-scale deaths, serious injuries, arbitrary detentions, denial of medical and legal assistance and allegations of concealment of bodies, including the existence of an alleged mass grave. The continued discovery of new bodies reinforces the need for immediate and independent intervention, failing which there is a serious risk of irreversible loss of evidence and consolidation of impunity.

The situation of injured detainees, deprived of adequate medical care and access to defence, represents a real and imminent risk to life and physical integrity, further aggravating State responsibility.

Beyond individual consequences, the events have generated collective trauma, widespread fear, social fabric breakdown and a growing crisis of trust between communities and State institutions. These facts cannot be treated as isolated incidents but rather as potential mass violations of human rights, requiring an institutional response commensurate with their gravity.

7. Legally Grounded Recommendations

In light of the documented facts, Plataforma DECIDE recommends:

- the immediate creation of an Independent Commission of Inquiry, based on Articles 2, 58 and 249 of the Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique, to establish individual and institutional responsibility;
- the urgent provision of adequate medical assistance to injured detainees, pursuant to Articles 40, 56 and 89 of the Constitution;
- the immediate guarantee of the right to defence, information and family contact, in accordance with Articles 62, 64 and 65;
- the urgent investigation of the alleged mass grave and preservation of evidence, pursuant to Articles 40 and 58;
- effective protection of witnesses, victims and family members, based on Articles 41, 56 and 62;
- disciplinary, civil and criminal accountability of perpetrators, as well as full reparation to victims, under Article 58;

- adoption of structural prevention measures, including regulation of artisanal mining and training of security forces, pursuant to Articles 2, 3 and 117 of the Constitution.