

# URGENT ACTION

## JOURNALIST FORCIBLY DISAPPEARED

On 7 April 2020, Ibraimo Abú Mbaruco, a journalist at Palma Community Radio, did not return to his home in Palma, northern Mozambique, after work. His family and colleagues fear that he could be a victim of military arbitrary detention. Army officers approached Ibraimo Abú Mbaruco on his way home after leaving the radio station. Since then, he has not been seen or heard from and his whereabouts remain unknown.

**TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER**

**Minister Helena Mateus Kida**

Honourable Minister of Justice, Constitutional and Religious Affairs

Av. Julius Nyerere 33

Maputo

Mozambique

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Dear Minister Helena Mateus Kida,

According to local reports, on 7 April 2020, Ibraimo Abú Mbaruco, a community radio journalist at Palma Community Radio, was arbitrarily detained by military forces in Palma district, Cabo Delgado Province. Ibraimo Abú Mbaruco was on his motorbike on his way home from work at around 6 p.m. when military officers allegedly approached him. He had time to send a text message to a colleague before he was taken away, in which he said: "Call me, I am being disturbed by militaries". Since then, he has not been seen or heard from and his whereabouts remain unknown.

The next day, Ibraimo Abú Mbaruco's family members and colleagues went to the military barracks in Palma where officers told them to look for him at the police station. The family members and colleagues registered a complaint regarding his enforced disappearance with the Palma district administration and the district command of the Police of the Republic of Mozambique (PRM). They have not yet received a reply from the authorities. On 14 April, the family filed a request at the Cabo Delgado Provincial Prosecutor's Office urging the Judicial Power to take the necessary measures to ensure the release of Ibraimo Abú Mbaruco.

In light of the above, I urge you to:

- Launch a prompt, thorough, impartial and effective investigation into the case to determine the whereabouts of the journalist Ibraimo Abú Mbaruco, keeping his family fully informed at all times, and if he is under state custody, ensure he is safely and immediately released;
- Put an end to the practice of enforced disappearances and ensure that every person arrested is adequately registered and enjoys the protection of the law;
- Ensure that the right to freedom of expression and media freedom are fully respected, protected, promoted and fulfilled and that journalists are able to freely carry out their work without fear of attacks, intimidation, harassment and censorship.

Yours sincerely,

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The situation is very concerning in the northern province of Cabo Delgado. Since October 2017, the northern districts of Cabo Delgado province have experienced armed attacks by individuals believed to be members of an extremist group, popularly known as "Al-Shabaab". The attackers have invaded villages, set houses on fire, hacked villagers to death with machetes and looted their food. Although the government increased its military presence in the region, its response was inadequate. Civilians suspected of being extremists and journalists reporting on the attacks were subjected to intimidation, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and other ill-treatment, and even summary executions.

The ongoing violent attacks in the northern districts of Cabo Delgado which have so far claimed hundreds of lives not only constitute one of the most heinous violations of human rights but also create an environment for more human rights violations and abuses. The unknown perpetrators, whose political demands remain undeclared, have been attacking rural villages, beheading residents, looting food and burning houses. Amnesty International has received disturbing reports of human rights abuses by those charged with protecting communities – the police and the army.

On 23 January 2019, a South African businessman Andre Hanekom died in mysterious circumstances under police custody after being shot in the arm and stomach. He had been abducted by four masked men armed with AK'47 rifles in Palma district on 1 August 2018. A series of events between security forces, justice and health services culminated in his death. The Mozambican authorities have not conducted any investigations into the torture allegations and his death.

Amnesty International is also aware that the government prohibits the media from reporting the current political and social conditions in these districts, which violates the people's right of access to information; that journalists and researchers have been harassed, intimidated, arrested and detained for reporting about the conflict in Cabo Delgado, in violation of the right to freedom of expression and media freedom.

On 17 December 2018, investigative journalist Estacio Valoi Amnesty International researcher David Matsinhe, and their driver were arbitrarily arrested by military forces while conducting research on communities attacked by an extremist group popularly known as "Al-Shabaab". The military forces arrested them at a roadblock in Mocímboa da Praia district and detained them incommunicado in secret detention centre. They were released on 19 December without charges, however their equipment, such as telephones, computers, photographic cameras, and the respective accessories remain with the army.

Amade Abubacar, a community radio journalist, was arbitrarily arrested on 5 January 2019 by police officers in Macomia district while interviewing internally displaced civilians who fled their homes due to the intensification of violent attacks in northern Cabo Delgado. On the same day, he was transferred from police custody to military detention in Mueda district, where he was held incommunicado for 12 days and allegedly subjected to torture and other ill treatment. Amade Abubacar was held in pre-trial detention for more than 90 days before being formally charged. During his pre-trial detention at the Mizeze prison in Pemba city, the prison authorities denied him family visits.

On 18 February 2019, security forces arrested and detained incommunicado Germano Adriano, Amade Abubacar's colleague, in Mizeze Jail, 20km from Pemba town. On 23 April, both Amade and Germano were granted provisional release and are currently facing charges of crimes of "inciting public disobedience" through "electronic means" and "injury against public officials."

Amnesty International is also aware that, after the arrest of Germano Adriano, the governor of Cabo Delgado threatened journalists, telling them in a press conference in Pemba that there was much more happening in the province than violent extremism, and warned them against dire consequences if they continued to report about violent extremism.

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** Portuguese; English. You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:** [27 May 2020]

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

**NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN:** Ibraimo Abú Mbaruco (he/his)

**LINK TO PREVIOUS UA:** N/A