

# MOZAMBIQUE News reports & clippings

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## Cabo Delgado Special Report 24-1 - civil war

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## Insurgents use rains for rapid move south, again reaching Nampula

Insurgents have strengthened their dominance of southern Mocimboa da Praia and parts of Macomia districts, and have marched, largely unchallenged, 200 km south into Nampula province, during the past two months. And the insurgents seem to have total freedom of movement.

The French foreign ministry last week (15 February) "strongly recommend its citizens not to travel to Mocimboa da Praia, Pemba and Palma, as well as on the roads linking these locations." It continued that travel to the entire province of Cabo Delgado and four districts of Nampula province - Mecuburi, Erati, Memba, and Nacarôa - is not recommended.

Insurgents have partially adopted a new strategy. Except in military confrontations, they are killing fewer people and burning fewer houses, and in some places trying to win hearts and minds of local people, especially those who profess Islam. On the roads the insurgents don't set fire to vehicles, but charge a toll.

The insurgents have clearly regrouped since their Mozambican leader Bonomade Machude Omar was killed in August last year. And they are making use of the rainy season; torrential rains are causing flooding and make many roads impassable for vehicles. Rain and cloud makes flying difficult and there are few helicopters in operation. The Southern African force (SAMIM - SADC Mission in Mozambique) will withdraw in July and is already being run down. EU and US training has not yet done much to improve motivation and competence and reduce misconduct of Mozambican forces.

Rwandan forces are maintaining security in the gas zones - Palma district with the gas development base on the Afungi peninsula, Mocimboa da Praia town, and the northern part of Mocimboa da Praia district. Tanzanian troops appear to have pushed insurgents out of Nangade district on the Rovuma river border. So the insurgents are moving south.

## Panic in Chiure

As insurgents move unchallenged westward across Chiure district on the southern edge of Cabo Delgado, people have been fleeing both into and out of Chiure town. Mayor Alicora Tuntunha told STV yesterday (21 Feb) that the city is full of refugees fleeing the insurgent advance. Some have family links and houses how have five or six families. Many others without local contacts are simply wandering around the streets. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) reported that by 16 February, 2,046 refugees had arrived in Chiure.



As refugees arrive many people are also fleeing Chiure town going north on the N1 main road 30 km to Metoro and toward Pemba, or south 35 km on the N1 to cross the Lurio river to Nampula province. Videos are circulating of hundreds of people fleeing Chiure and walking south to Nampula province. The photo above is from a video posted by a truck driver going south from Chiure on Tuesday (20 Feb). <https://t.me/zitamarlive/3174> Rains later on Tuesday made the trek more miserable.

The provincial government of Nampula province has opened a reception centre in Eráti for refugees from Chiure. As at yesterday morning (21 Feb), 13,640 people had registered, said the Eráti district administrator, Manuel Salimo Manussa. Zitamar reports that the flow of displaced people moving across the Lúrio river has largely stopped today.

## President Nyusi and Rwandans involved

The seriousness of the crisis is shown by President Filipe Nyusi making an unexpected visit yesterday (21 Feb) to Pemba in response to the surge in insurgent activity.

On Tuesday night insurgents crossed the N1 at Ocua, south of Chiure town and close to Nampula. Insurgents burned a fuel truck and had a confrontation with security forces. The insurgents probably intend to cross the river at Ocua to get to Nampula, as they did in 2022.

Speaking to reporters after a meeting with the provincial government, Nyusi said that Rwandan troops had joined with Mozambican troops in the confrontation near Ocua. This is the first time the Rwandans have gone this far from their normal two districts of Palma and Mocimboa da Praia, and shows just how worried the government has become.

**Comment:** As we note below, insurgents marched south for more than a month, with their movements widely covered in the press. Yet Ocua Tuesday was only their second confrontation with the military, and that required the help of the Rwandan hired soldiers. The military have had a year of training from the US and the EU, and a still unable to challenge the insurgency. This war could go on indefinitely. *jh*

## Moving south to Nampula

The move south began in mid-January and has been largely unchallenged. Insurgents began moving through Quissanga district in 19 January and were near the district town four days later. Administrator Sidonio Jose told O Pais that they met with the local population and then moved on without causing any harm.

They continued south through Metuge district, which is north and west of the provincial capital Pemba. On 27 and 28 January they went into Pulo and Nicavaco villages and killed four people. They moved south into Mecufi district and were seen crossing the main N1 road at Nanilia on 30 January. This is just 25 km from Pemba.

On 31 January the insurgents entered the nearby village of Naminaue. There is a close military base and an army group combined with local militia was sent. But it was ambushed by the insurgents. Between three and eight soldiers and militia members were killed and four vehicles destroyed. Islamic State Mozambique has published pictures of its ambush which show two burned military vehicles, captured weapons and ammunition, and the bodies of seven slain soldiers.

The insurgents then moved south, passing peacefully through villages and staying overnight in at least one village. They then appear to have divided into two groups. One moved southeast and through Mecufi district. On 10 February these insurgents crossed the Lurio river into Memba district of Nampula province and stayed the night in Sirissa village.

The other group, estimated at 200 insurgents, crossed the Megaruma river on 3 February into Chiure district. On 9 February they attacked Nacoja village and burned a church.

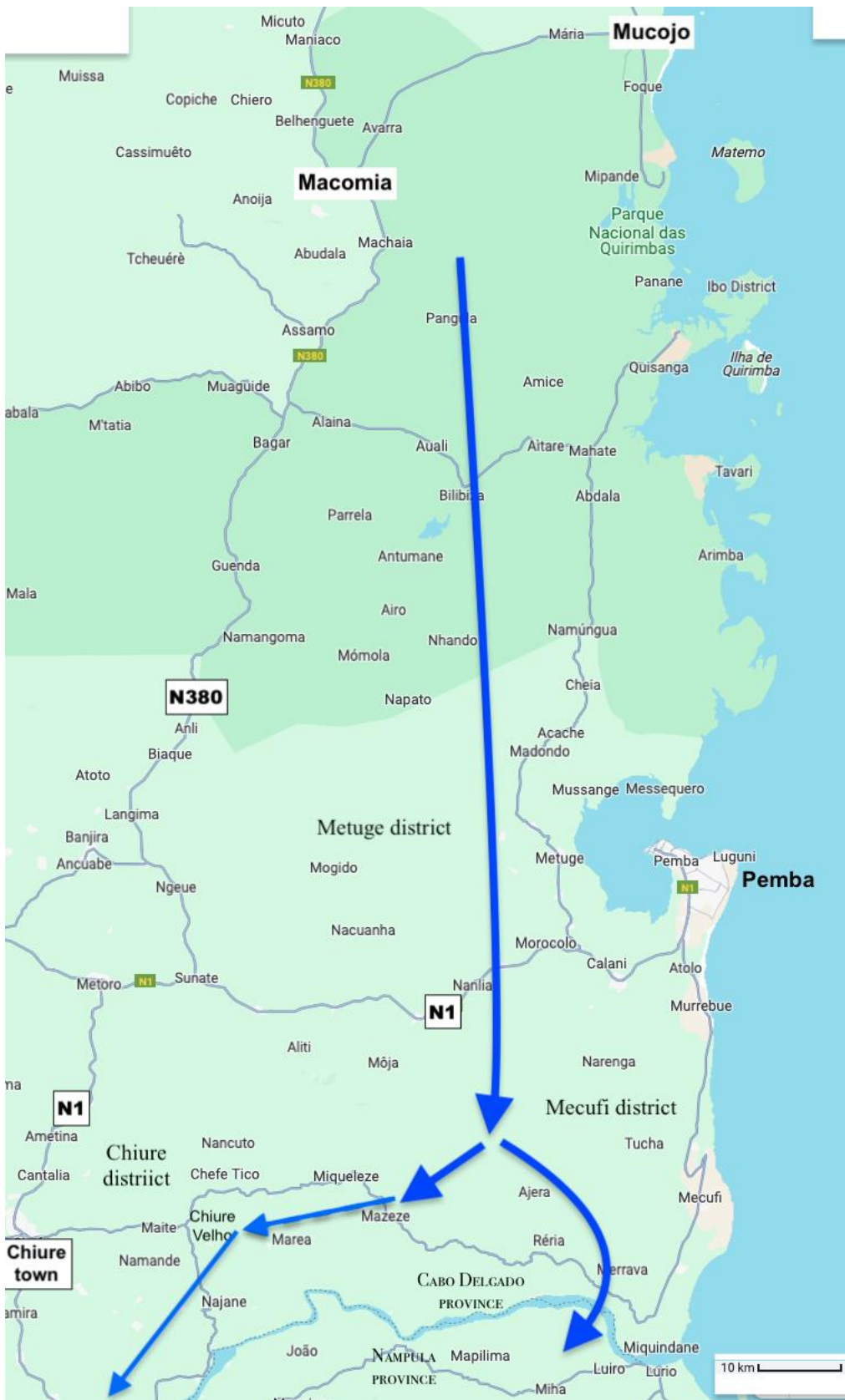
On Monday 12 February at about 17.00 they entered Mazeze administrative town. The local military contingent had already fled to Chiure Velho, 20 km to the west, leaving the town unprotected. Most residents also fled. But insurgents talked to the remaining local people telling them to be good Muslims. They burned or shot up a Roman Catholic church and the priests house, a market, and the house of the post administrator. Priests had already been evacuated from Chiure district and moved to Pemba.

On Saturday 17 February insurgents went into Magaia village and reportedly killed 4 people and burned a school.

Many Mazeze residents who had run to Chiure Velho, fled again to Chiure town after reports that the insurgents were also moving west and had reached the village of Namitil, just 7 km from Chiure town.

Many people tried to flee south to Nampula province, but it appears that the insurgents had have the same idea, and some have gone south from Chiure Velho toward the Lurio river border with Nampula. (Sources: Lusa, Carta de Moçambique, Mediafax, AIM, Zitamar, Cabo Ligado, Focus Group, OIM-DTM, VOA, O Pais)

**Comment:** The insurgents followed the same route into Nampula as they did in September 2022, which is a corridor not sympathetic to the government. The Chiure-Mecufi border zone was occupied by Renamo in the 1980s and Chiure town now has a Renamo mayor. Memba district of Nampula had one of the recent "cholera riots", which are really attacks of government officials disliked by local people. The coastal zone is largely Muslim and distrusting of Frelimo, and the main reason for the insurgent move into Nampula is to recruit guerrillas. *jh*



## Insurgents consolidate their zones

The war never stopped, but it did slow down. But from late December attacks and incidents increased. Insurgents control two linked small zones. One is along the Messalo river 50 km from the sea to Chai, which is an area of impenetrable jungle, called the Catupa Forest. North of the

Messalo is Mocimboa da Praia district and south of the river is Macomia district. The other insurgent controlled zones is the coastal zone of Macomia district, about 60 km long and 40 km wide, and is connected to the Messalo river forest.

Geographically, this is a small war. From mid December, just before the rains, insurgents re-opened three fronts: first on the Macomia coast, second the N380 road with Chai town and Muidumbe district. These control the main transport channels, the N380 and coastal shipping, and have a major impact on the natural gas projects further north.

The N380 is the only paved road from Pemba north to Mueda and to Mocimboa da Praia and now the Afungi gas project, so all important traffic passes through Chai which is a historic pinch point, near the N380 bridge over the Messalo. It is where Alberto Chipande fired the first shots of the independence war on 25 September 1964. Macomia town on the N380 is 50 km south of Chai. The coastal town of Mucojo is key to controlling coastal shipping.

The third front is attacks close of Mocimboa da Praia town, to challenge Rwandan and Mozambican government claims that this zone is peaceful.

## **Brutal fighting and military misconduct along the Macomia coast**

By far the bloodiest and most brutal fighting in the past two months has been along the coast of Macomia district. The key coastal town of Mucojo has changed hands six times. Insurgents killed 25 soldiers and the Mozambican navy is accused to killing more than 40 fishermen.

In December, the army deployed soldiers in Mucojo and nearby Pangange on the beach, and those villages were attacked by insurgents on 26 and 27 December. In Mucojo the soldiers abandoned their position, but in Pangane they defended their base, and apparently reoccupied Mucojo. But government soldiers executed three young men in different villages around Mucojo 9-11 January, which caused anger in the village. On 13 January insurgents retook Pangane and warned the army it would be punished for killing the three civilians and insurgents would launch an attack. The army abandoned Mucojo and it was re-occupied by insurgents on 21 January. With better access to the sea, insurgents moved by boat to coastal villages preaching and warning of the danger of "aiding infidels". Insurgents also took all the food from the barracks. (Cabo Ligado 8-21 January, Carta de Moçambique 15 Jan, VoA 22 Jan, Focus Group 13 Dec-17 Jan).

For the first time, in Mucojo a strict interpretation of Islamic law was imposed, including the banning of certain haircuts, the sale of alcohol, and tight or tapered trousers. Meanwhile, daily prayers and attendance at mosques were encouraged. But this had already been an issue with local militant preachers banning the sale of alcohol.

Insurgents withdrew and the army retook Mucojo without a fight on 31 January. An estimated 150 insurgents responded with a large attack on the night of 9-10 February. They arrived by boat and captured the base, killing 25 soldiers - one of the largest government losses in one battle in recent war. Macomia district administrator, Tomás Badae, confirmed the death toll. It is believed the insurgents still hold Mucojo.

Local people are complaining of Mozambique defence force atrocities, while soldiers are also complaining of lack of food, and the sale of their food by their commanders.

Since the beginning of the year Mozambique navy patrols have largely stopped fishing along the coast. Zitamar (16 February) reports that the first attack happened close to Muissune island in Mocimboa da Praia district when the navy killed 30 fishers in a boat. On 25 January marines fired at a group of fishermen near Quilufa island, close to Pangane, killing 12 of 13. They were pulling in the net with six men on each side, who were shot, and one at the back who escaped and went to Pangane and told the story.



Zitamar continues that on 30 January at about 5 pm near Makoloe island near Pangane marines stopped two boats with 32 fishermen. The marines stripped the fishermen naked, blindfolded them, and tied their hands behind their backs, according to the account of a survivor. The marines, he said, started questioning the fishermen about insurgents in Pangane, and if the fishermen had sold them food. They emptied the fishermen's wallets. One of them, called Nuh, asked to be allowed to urinate. While doing so, a marine kicked him out of the boat and into the water. Nuh managed to untie his hands while in the water and swim to Makaloe island. He told his story when he arrived back in Pangane the following day, 31 January.

The tactics have been successful and fishing has stopped from Mucojo and Pangane.

Assaults and abuses by the security forces are reported to be common on the road between Macomia town and Mucojo. Ten civilians travelling through Nambala village were assaulted by soldiers and at least one beaten badly.

## Thumbing their nose at Rwanda

The Mocimboa da Praia front is mainly to attack close to Mocimboa da Praia town and keep control of the forest zone north of the Messalo river. Again, action started early, with attacks on Chimbanga village on the N380 just 10 km west of Mocimboa da Praia and nearby Notwe on 6 January which killed five people, including an MSF doctor. Attacks on the villages of Malinde and Chinda killed one person. The attacks caused panic in Mocimboa town which was supposed to be safe and returning to normal. Rwandan forces banned all travel out of town for two days, and even then residents could leave only if they did not carry anything that might indicate they were fleeing or abandoning their homes. Rwandan forces did find an insurgent base in Naguitengue, believed to have been responsible for the attacks, and hit it, perhaps killing three insurgents. But insurgents entered the village of Nachiji on 9 January and killed one person. Small incidents continued, and between 1 and 12 February insurgents went to 2 islands and 6 villages, including Chimbanga again, and thus close to Mocimboa da Praia town. Nine civilians were killed and food taken.

## Controlling the N380

The N380 paved road has regular incidents, and goes through four districts. From south to north they are Meluco, Macomia, Muidumbe, and Mocimboa da Praia. On 15 December a group of heavily armed men stopped a chapa (minibus) and only asked for water. On 21 December in Chitunda village, Muidumbe, on the A380, insurgents stopped a bus, searched passengers, but only took 10,000 Meticias (\$150) from the driver.

Chai was attacked on 30 December, and a riot police (UIR) base in nearby 5<sup>th</sup> Congress village on 7 January. Chai was attacked again on 1 February. The road is currently closed due to flooding, but when it is open vehicles travel in a military convoy north of Macomia town.

There were roadblocks on the N380 in Meluco district. On driver was shot and killed for not stopping. Buses were being charged 100,000 Meticais (\$1600) collected from the passengers and cars were charged 50,000 Meticais (\$800). At one road block there were leaflets saying if Christians were caught they would have to convert to Islam or pay a tax.

There was a series of small attacks in Muidumbe, which has been a contested district throughout the war.

### Other notes

**Displaced people in Cabo Delgado have fallen to 542,535** and 601,866 people have returned home, reports IOM (UN Migration) in its January 2024 assessment. Of these, 181,781 displaced people have returned to Mocimboa da Praia and 121,177 to Palma districts.

IOM recorded 8,537 people newly displaced in January. But it was the first time for only 1000, and 3000 had been displaced more than four times.

**It is still raining heavily in Cabo Delgado** and the Messalo, Montepuez and Megaruma rivers are flooding, the Ministry of Public Works daily flood bulletin says. <https://bit.ly/Moz-Flood-2024> The N380 is closed near Chai and the road from Pemba is closed near Quissanga because bridges are under water. High rainfall is predicted to continue into April.

The accord signed on 3 June 2022 for Rwanda to send troops also contained an **extradition agreement which has never been ratified**. A number of opponents of President Paul Kagame have taken refuge in Mozambique and Kagame was them back. Several have been killed by

Rwandan hit squads. The parliament session which opens today is expected to ratify the extradition law.

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## **Important external links**

**Books by Joseph Hanlon can be downloaded, free:** <https://bit.ly/HanlonBooks>

**Flood, cyclone and weather:** weather <https://www.inam.gov.mz/>

rainfall [https://www.inam.gov.mz/images/DAPT\\_Previsoes/Manha/Previsao\\_Manha.pdf](https://www.inam.gov.mz/images/DAPT_Previsoes/Manha/Previsao_Manha.pdf)

**Daily flood and monthly dry season reports** - <https://bit.ly/Moz-Flood-2024>

**Cyclone trackers**, <https://bit.ly/Reunion-cyclone>, <https://www.metoc.navy.mil/jtwc/jtwc.html>

(which uses z time which is UCT - Coordinated Universal Time) and <https://www.cyclocane.com/>

**Two LSE working papers - World Bank questions its Mozambique 'success'** where oligarchs brought high inequality, poverty and corruption - <https://bit.ly/Moz-LSE-208c> and **How the IMF and World Bank caused a resource curse and civil war in Mozambique** - <https://bit.ly/Moz-LSE-209>

**Minimum wage & exchange rate charts, tables 1996-2022** <https://bit.ly/MozMinWage2022>

Previous editions of this newsletter: <https://bit.ly/MozNews2023> and <https://bit.ly/MozNews2022>

My Mozambique archive: <http://bit.ly/Mozamb>

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## **Cabo Delgado**

**Cabo Ligado** weekly report on civil war <https://www.caboligado.com/>

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>

Cabo-Delgado-Free-for-all. 20 Apr 2022. <https://bit.ly/Moz-593>

### **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](http://bit.ly/MozGasEng)

Gás\_para\_desenvolvimento\_ou\_apenas\_dinheiro?\_2015 [bit.ly/MozGasPt](http://bit.ly/MozGasPt)

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## **Background reading**

### **Special reports**

Social protection report - 2017 Mozambique - <http://bit.ly/MozSocPro>

Special report on four poverty surveys: [bit.ly/MozPoverty](http://bit.ly/MozPoverty)

### **\$2bn secret debt - in English**

Secret debt trial (Aug-Oct 2021) press reports <https://bit.ly/Moz-secret-debt>



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](http://bit.ly/MozAR-debt)  
**2018 Constitution** - <http://bit.ly/2KF588T>

### Eleven books by Joseph Hanlon can be downloaded, free: <https://bit.ly/HanlonBooks>

Zimbabwe takes back its land (2013) <https://bit.ly/Zim-takes-land>  
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 Bicicletas – mas há desenvolvimento? (2008)  
Civil War Civil Peace (2006): <https://bit.ly/Civil-War-Civil-Peace>  
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) <https://bit.ly/Peace-wo-Profit>  
Mozambique: Who Calls the Shots (1991) <https://bit.ly/Shots-Moz>  
Mozambique: The Revolution Under Fire (1984)

### These are still available for sale:

Galinhas e cerveja: uma receita para o crescimento (2014) (free in English)  
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)

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### 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](http://www.jornalnoticias.co.mz)  
O País: [www.opais.co.mz](http://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)  
Also CDD now controls Fórum de Monitoria do Orçamento - FMO (main debt group) <http://www.fmo.org.mz>  
and RMDDH - Rede Moçambicana dos Defensores dos Direitos Humanos (a human rights group).  
To subscribe to all CDD publications: <http://eepurl.com/gO9l6v> (English or Portuguese).

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