

Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association

Ref.: AL MOZ 4/2025
(Please use this reference in your reply)

31 December 2025

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 52/4, 52/9 and 59/4.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning the threats against and the risks to the safety of human rights defender Sismo Eduardo.

Mr. **Sismo Eduardo** is a human rights defender and the coordinator of the civil society organization *Associação de Paralegais para Assistência no Apoio ao Desenvolvimento Sustentável da Comunidade (APAADEC)*, based in Nampula, which promotes responsible natural resource management and good governance. Mr. Eduardo is also an outspoken critic of the Government. He hosts a television programme on *Rádio Televisão Encontro* in Nampula, broadcast three times a week, called *Tribuna do Povo* ("People's Forum"). The programme addresses issues of injustice, economic governance, natural resource management, human rights and democracy.

During the 2024 post-election period, Mr. Eduardo was involved in the follow-up to situations of human rights violations in the context of the protests, including providing direct assistance to victims of police violence, and facilitating transport to wounded individuals to health facilities, despite significant logistical and security challenges. Between 24 and 26 November 2025, Mr. Eduardo was scheduled to participate in a training on human rights for civil society members in Nampula. However, fearing for his safety, he fled the province on 23 November and was unable to participate.

According to the information received:

In October 2025, Mr. Eduardo started receiving a series of warnings indicating imminent threats to his safety. On 30 October 2025, he received a call from an acquaintance employed by the Government and affiliated with the ruling party Frelimo. The caller warned him that he was not safe and urged him to immediately return to the city (he was in Anchilo, approximately 20 km away from Nampula city, at the time).

On 18 or 19 November 2025, a young man known to him, who expressed concern for his wellbeing, warned him to "be careful" and to "stop doing what he does."

On 21 November 2025, another acquaintance contacted Mr. Eduardo to ask about his whereabouts. Upon learning that he was in his neighborhood, the acquaintance urged him to leave immediately and either flee to a distant location or barricade himself at home, warning him again that he was not safe.

On 22 November 2025, Mr. Eduardo left home in the early hours and spent the day in hiding before returning in the evening. On the same day, the Mozambican Network of Human Rights Defenders (RMDDH) published a social media post reporting that he had been threatened by unidentified individuals and had fled his home in search of safety.

On 23 November, still feeling unsafe, he decided to leave the province altogether and go into hiding.

On 3 December 2025, the RMDDH reportedly submitted a formal complaint to the National Criminal Investigation Service (SERNIC), with knowledge of the Provincial Prosecutor's Office, the Governor's Office and the Office of the Secretary of State in Nampula.

On 4 December 2025, unknown individuals reportedly visited his home asking about his whereabouts, without identifying themselves. Several people also contacted his family to inquire about his whereabouts.

On 15 December 2025, Mr. Eduardo returned to Nampula with the support of the Provincial Governor's Office, which reportedly covered the cost of his flight ticket. Notwithstanding this support, Mr. Eduardo has not been informed of any measures adopted to ensure his protection and continues to express concerns over his safety.

Without prejudging the accuracy of the information, we wish to express our concern at these acts of intimidation and threats against Mr. Eduardo, in apparent direct relation with his human rights defence work and the exercise of his right to freedom of expression. We are concerned that Mr. Eduardo's prominent and public work defending human rights in Mozambique may put him at elevated risk of attack, including threatening his life. We are equally concerned that not enough protection measures are being taken to ensure Mr. Eduardo's safety.

In her report to the Human Rights Council in 2020, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders highlighted the link between the killing of human rights defenders and death threats, noting that “[n]ot all death threats to human rights defenders are followed by a murder, and not all such murders are preceded by death threats. However, many killings are preceded by a threat.”

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, please refer to the **Annex on Reference to international human rights law** attached to this letter which cites international human rights instruments and standards relevant to these allegations.

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would be grateful

for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please provide information on whether any investigation has been carried out into the threats against and intimidation of Mr. Eduardo. If no investigations have been carried out, please explain why.
3. Please provide detailed information on which measures have been taken or will be put in place by competent State authorities to ensure the protection of Mr. Eduardo from further threats and attacks.
4. Please provide information about measures taken to ensure that human rights defenders in Mozambique can carry out their legitimate and peaceful work without intimidation, threats or attacks in a safe and enabling environment.

This communication and any response received from your Excellency's Government will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) within 60 days. They will also subsequently be made available in the usual report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

While awaiting a reply, we urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to halt the alleged violations and prevent their re-occurrence and in the event that the investigations support or suggest the allegations to be correct, to ensure the accountability of any person(s) responsible for the alleged violations.

We may publicly express our concerns in the near future as, in our view, the information upon which the press release will be based is sufficiently reliable to indicate a matter warranting immediate attention. We also believe that the wider public should be alerted to the potential implications of the above-mentioned allegations. The press release will indicate that we have been in contact with your Excellency's Government's to clarify the issue/s in question.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Mary Lawlor

Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

Irene Khan

Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression

Gina Romero

Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association

Annex

Reference to international human rights law

In connection with above alleged facts and concerns, we wish to refer to article 19 and 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, acceded to by Mozambique on 21 July 1993, which provides the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the right to freedom of association. As per article 19(2), the freedom of expression includes the “right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kind, regardless of frontiers either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice”. Intimidation or retaliation of any kind against a person for holding or expressing an opinion, such as an opinion critical of the government, is a violation of article 19(1).

Article 19 of the ICCPR guarantees the right to freedom of opinion and the right to freedom of expression, which includes the right “to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media”. In its [general comment No. 34](#), the Human Rights Committee stated that States parties to the ICCPR are required to guarantee the right to freedom of expression, including “political discourse, commentary on one's own and on public affairs, canvassing, discussion of human rights, journalism, cultural and artistic expression, teaching, and religious discourse” (CCPR/C/GC/34, para.11). The Committee further asserts that there is a duty of States to put in place effective measures to protect against attacks aimed at silencing those exercising their right to freedom of expression (para.23).

Recognizing how journalists and persons who engage in the gathering and analysis of information on the human rights situation and who publish human rights-related reports, including judges and lawyers, are frequently subjected to threats, intimidation and attacks because of their activities, the Committee stresses that “all such attacks should be vigorously investigated in a timely fashion, and the perpetrators prosecuted, and the victims, or, in the case of killings, their representatives, be in receipt of appropriate forms of redress” (CCPR/C/GC/34, para.23).

We also recall that article 22 of the ICCPR protects the right to freedom of association, including the rights of everyone to associate with others and to pursue common interests. Freedom of association is closely linked to the rights to freedom of expression and to peaceful assembly and is of fundamental importance to the functioning of democratic societies. These rights can only be restricted in very specific circumstances, where the restrictions serve a legitimate public purpose as recognized by international standards and are necessary and proportionate for achieving that purpose.

We would like to refer your Excellency's Government to the fundamental principles set forth in the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, also known as the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. In particular, we would like to refer to articles 1 and 2 of the Declaration which state that everyone has the right to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and

international levels and that each State has a prime responsibility and duty to protect, promote and implement all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We also wish to refer to articles 6(c), 9 and 12, which state that everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to study, discuss, form or hold opinions on the observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and to draw public attention to these matters; to benefit from an effective remedy and be protected in the event of the violation of these rights; and to participate in peaceful activities against violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms.