



Genocide Watch
The Alliance Against Genocide

Genocide Emergency Alert: Cabo Delgado in Mozambique **November 2020**

Genocide Watch is issuing a Genocide Emergency Alert for northern Mozambique. Since 2017, the homegrown fundamentalist Islamist group Al-Sunnah wa Jamaah (ASWJ) has violently targeted residents of the northern Cabo Delgado province. Sporadic attacks have turned into a brutal Islamist insurgency. The United Nations (U.N.) has called the situation “[desperate](#).”

Economic marginalization of northern communities has fuelled resentment toward the southerner-dominated political class. [Ethnoreligious tensions](#) between the Muslim Macua and Mwani groups and the Christian Makonde [predate and contributed to](#) the 1977-1992 civil war between the Marxist Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) and the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO). FRELIMO won the war. RENAMO continues to [draw on the grievances](#) of northern communities. Since 2010, the FRELIMO government has [forcibly displaced](#) entire communities, preventing them from reaping any benefits from mining and gas extraction by international companies. All they gain is pollution.

The Islamic State (IS) has established a stronghold in the Cabo Delgado province of Mozambique. It [first claimed](#) attacks in Cabo Delgado in June 2019, when ASWJ [announced its affiliation with the Islamic State](#) within the [Islamic State Central Africa Province \(ISCAP\)](#). ASWJ is locally known as [al-Shabab](#) but has no known links to the Somalia-based group with the same name. Fighters have symbolically brandished [IS flags](#) as ASWJ has openly declared its aim to [establish a caliphate](#) in the region. The ASWJ has capitalized on popular distrust of the government, [handing out looted food](#) to gain support of residents in towns it attacks.

ASWJ this year perpetrated several genocidal massacres. In April, they massacred 52 villagers who refused to join their cause. During the weekend of November 6-8, attackers [beheaded and dismembered over 50 people](#) in the districts of Miudumbe and Macomia. They abducted women and children and burnt down homes. The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) says the violence has [killed at least 2,283 people](#) since it started in 2017. Attacks increased by [300%](#) in the first four months of 2020, compared with the same period last year. ACLED says ASWJ has claimed over [600 attacks](#) in three years.

The U.N. said in October 2020 that [355,000 civilians have been displaced](#) and are facing severe [food shortages](#). On October 29, at least [40 displaced people drowned](#) when a boat sank near the provincial capital, Pemba, where about [100,000 people have sought refuge](#). Over 10,000 displaced people arrived in Pemba in the [last week of October](#). ASWJ has expanded its raids to neighboring Tanzania’s Mtwara region. Tanzanian security forces have reacted to the attacks, but they also [deported around 1,000 refugees](#) back to Cabo Delgado.

National security forces and [Russian and South African mercenaries](#) have tried to repress ASWJ, but the International Crisis Group says the Mozambican army is [poorly prepared](#). It lost the strategic town of [Mocimboa da Praia](#) to ASWJ in August. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) met in August to discuss plans to deploy foreign troops, but [more militarization](#) could further [alienate the population](#) due to the Mozambique army’s record of [human rights abuses](#).

Genocide Watch recognizes the situation in Cabo Delgado as [Stage 9: Extermination](#)

Genocide Watch recommends:

- The Mozambique government must refrain from brutal counterinsurgency tactics and use the army to protect civilians and their rights.
- Mozambique should request help from SADC to defeat ASWJ insurgents.
- The U.N., Mozambique government, and neighboring governments must protect the rights of displaced people from Cabo Delgado and provide them with sufficient aid.
- The Mozambique government must invest profits from gas extraction in projects that benefit local communities.
- Church and mosque leaders should run intensive educational campaigns to promote tolerance and oppose extremism.