

*Geneva International Centre for Justice*

**52nd Session of the Universal Periodic Review**

**MOZAMBIQUE'S FOURTH UNIVERSAL  
PERIODIC REVIEW: ASSESSING HUMAN  
RIGHTS COMMITMENTS AND STATE  
ACTION**



*By Elisa Cattoli / GICJ*



April 2026

## **Table of Contents**

I. Executive Summary of the Fourth Universal Periodic Review Cycle	3
II. Mozambique's Social and Political Landscape	4
II.I Islamist Insurgency and Insecurity in Cabo Delgado	5
II. II Political Crisis and State Repression	6
II. III Corruption, Weak Governance, and Organised Crime	6
III. Background and Critical Perspective on the Subsisting Issues Across the Second, Third and Fourth Universal Period Review Cycles	7
IV. Exhaustive Summary of the 4th Universal Periodic Review Cycle	9
V. Recommendations Section	10
VI. Closing Remarks by the Representative of Mozambique	14
VII. Looking Forward: New Priorities of the International Community and Commitments of Mozambique	16
VIII. Critical Reflections on Mozambique's Fourth Universal Periodic Review Cycle	18
IX. GICJ Position	19
X. Sources	21

## **I. Executive Summary of the Fourth Universal Periodic Review Cycle**

The fourth Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Mozambique highlighted a series of interconnected human rights challenges affecting the country's political, social, economic, and humanitarian situation. One of the principal issues raised during the review regarded the ongoing security crisis in Cabo Delgado, where violent extremism, armed conflict, and insecurity have caused large-scale internal displacement, destruction of infrastructure, and serious security risks for civilians. Several Member States present at the review meeting expressed concern regarding killings, abductions, recruitment and use of children by armed groups, sexual violence, and the limited access of affected populations to basic healthcare, education, and food.

Another major concern raised throughout the review related to civil and political rights. The UN assessment and several delegations referred to allegations of excessive use of force, arbitrary detention, and abuses committed by security forces, particularly in the context of post-electoral violence following the October 2024 elections and counterterrorism operations in northern Mozambique. Concerns were also raised regarding attacks against journalists, shrinking civic space, restrictions affecting freedom of expression and association, and weak or inexistent accountability mechanisms. Although Mozambique acknowledged certain incidents and referred to ongoing investigations and institutional reforms, many Member States encouraged the Government to strengthen judicial independence, ensure transparent investigations into human rights violations, and improve oversight of security institutions.

The protection of vulnerable groups constituted another central theme of the review. The National Report highlighted the ongoing gender-based violence incidents, child marriage, trafficking, child labour, and discrimination affecting women, children, persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons, and refugees. Stakeholders noted that despite legal reforms and national strategies, implementation gaps remained significant, particularly in rural and conflict-affected regions, and particularly regarding women and persons with disabilities. Concerns were also raised regarding limited access to inclusive education, healthcare, social protection, and support services for survivors of violence. In response, many recommendations called for stronger enforcement of laws combating child marriage and gender-based violence, increased investment in child protection systems, expanded inclusive education and healthcare, and improved accessibility for persons with disabilities.

The review also focused on broader structural challenges affecting the realisation of economic and social rights. Additional recommendations addressed corruption, governance reforms, anti-trafficking measures, refugee protection, and the need to align domestic legislation with international human rights instruments. Mozambique was further encouraged to continue cooperation with international organizations and treaty bodies, including through the ratification and implementation of pending international conventions.

While Mozambique presented numerous legislative reforms, policy frameworks, and institutional initiatives as evidence of progress, many of the issues identified during previous review cycles remain unresolved. Persistent insecurity in Cabo Delgado, weak implementation of existing laws, limited institutional capacity, socio-economic inequality, and recurring concerns regarding accountability and civic freedoms suggest that many of these challenges are likely to continue into the fifth UPR cycle. The review therefore reflected both the Government's willingness to engage in dialogue and reform and the continuing difficulties in translating formal commitments into effective protection of human rights on the ground.

## II. Mozambique's Social and Political Landscape



Source: [Unsplash.com](https://unsplash.com)

Mozambique is currently experiencing a multifaceted crisis characterized by political instability, violent insurgency, weak governance, and widespread human rights concerns. Although the country has experienced periods of economic growth since the end of its civil war in 1992, persistent structural inequalities, corruption, and fragile state institutions have contributed to increasing social and political tensions. In recent years, these challenges have intensified due to both the Islamist insurgency in the north of the country and the growing

political unrest following the disputed presidential elections of October 2024. Together, these developments have significantly undermined national stability and deepened humanitarian insecurity across several regions of the country.

## **II.I Islamist Insurgency and Insecurity in Cabo Delgado**

The insurgency in the Cabo Delgado province officially emerged in 2015, but its origins are deeply rooted in longstanding socio-economic marginalization, dissatisfaction with political elites, and resentment toward the State. Many communities in northern Mozambique have historically felt excluded from the benefits of economic development despite the region's abundance of natural resources, including gas reserves and mineral wealth. Frustration over corruption, unemployment, and weak public services created easy ground for radicalisation, particularly among the marginalised youth. In addition, opposition grew against forms of moderate Islam that were perceived as being too closely associated with the ruling Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (FRELIMO) party and the political establishment .

Within this context, a local extremist group known as Ahlu Sunna Waljama (ASWJ), commonly referred to locally as al-Shabaab, began organising armed cells and establishing links with foreign jihadist networks. Over time, the movement evolved into a violent insurgency capable of carrying out coordinated attacks against civilians, government forces, and infrastructure. In May 2022, ISIS formally recognized the group as one of its regional affiliates under the name Islamic State Mozambique (ISM), further increasing international concern over the conflict and its regional implications.

The violence in Cabo Delgado and neighboring provinces has had devastating humanitarian consequences. Government security forces, allied foreign troops, and insurgent groups have all been accused of committing serious abuses against civilians. Armed attacks, killings, destruction of villages, and forced displacement have affected hundreds of thousands of people. According to humanitarian reports, more than 330,000 people were displaced during recent waves of violence, while tens of thousands fled renewed attacks in 2025 alone, particularly in the districts of Chiúre, Ancuabe, and Muidumbe. Insurgent attacks expanded beyond Cabo Delgado into the Nampula province, where attacks in the Momba district in late 2024 reportedly killed dozens of civilians and displaced large numbers of residents .

The conflict has also severely disrupted humanitarian assistance and access to basic services. Insecurity has forced aid organisations to suspend operations in some areas, while extortion, ransom demands, and attacks on transport routes have hindered the movement of humanitarian workers. Public healthcare systems in conflict-affected regions have deteriorated significantly, leaving many communities without adequate medical support. Children have been among the most vulnerable victims of the insurgency. Reports by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch indicate that armed groups have abducted children to use them for forced labour, transporting looted goods, combat activities, and forced marriages. Women and girls have also faced increasing levels of gender-based

violence, including killings and sexual abuse linked both to the conflict and to broader social insecurity.

## **II. II Political Crisis and State Repression**

Alongside the security crisis in the north, Mozambique has entered a period of heightened political instability following the presidential elections held on 9 October 2024 . The election results were widely contested by opposition groups and segments of the population, who accused the Government of electoral irregularities and fraud. Despite these disputes, Daniel Chapo was sworn in as President in January 2025, triggering widespread demonstrations across the country .

The State's response to these protests was marked by heavy repression and extensive use of force by security services. Human rights organisations documented numerous cases of police violence, including unlawful killings, arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, and intimidation of opposition supporters. By early 2025, hundreds of people had reportedly been killed during clashes and crackdowns related to the protests. Special police units were accused of using live ammunition against demonstrators in several cities, including Matola and Nampula. Reports also emerged of individuals disappearing after being detained by authorities, contributing to a growing climate of fear and political intimidation.

Freedom of expression and press freedom have increasingly deteriorated under these conditions. Journalists, political commentators, and Civil Society activists who criticise the government or report on the insurgency have frequently faced harassment, detention, and violence. Cases of kidnappings and attacks against media workers have become more common in recent years. In Cabo Delgado, journalists attempting to document the conflict have reportedly been temporarily detained by military forces and had their equipment confiscated. The government has also introduced legislation that human rights activists argue restricts independent reporting, including amendments to anti-terrorism laws that criminalize the dissemination of allegedly false information related to terrorist activities. Press freedom advocates have expressed concern that these laws could be used to silence reporting on State abuses and military operations in northern provinces of the country .

## **II. III Corruption, Weak Governance, and Organised Crime**

It can be argued that the insurgency and the political crisis are longstanding problems of corruption and weak governance. Corruption remains deeply entrenched within State institutions and political structures, with patronage networks playing a central role in the distribution of resources and political power. Public institutions, including the judiciary, often lack independence and are vulnerable to pressure from the executive branch, limiting accountability and weakening the enforcement of anti-corruption laws, especially because internal corruption is prevalent among judges and prosecutors. Mozambique's anti-corruption

framework itself has also been criticized for significant loopholes and ineffective implementation .

The lack of transparency surrounding the government’s handling of the Cabo Delgado insurgency has further contributed to public mistrust. At the same time, Mozambique has increasingly become a hub for transnational organized crime, including drug trafficking, maritime piracy, and terrorism-related smuggling networks. Human trafficking is particularly prevalent in the region, and sees women and girls as the main victims. According to Human Rights Watch, since 2018 around 600 women and girls have been enslaved by ISIS.

Weak border controls, limited State capacity, and corruption among political and economic elites have facilitated the expansion of these criminal activities. Overall, Mozambique’s current situation reflects the intersection of armed conflict, political repression, governance failures, and socio-economic inequality. The combination of insecurity in the north, contested political authority, restrictions on civil liberties, and widespread corruption continues to undermine democratic governance, threatening long-term stability in the country.

### **III. Background and Critical Perspective on the Subsisting Issues Across the Second, Third and Fourth Universal Period Review Cycles**

The recommendations made during the second and third UPR cycles demonstrate significant continuity, reflecting persistent human rights concerns and ongoing implementation gaps in Mozambique. Across both cycles, numerous States repeatedly urged Mozambique to ratify outstanding international human rights instruments, including the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, indicating limited progress in strengthening the country’s international legal commitments. Similar continuity can be observed regarding the strengthening of the National Human Rights Commission in line with the Paris Principles, as recommendations consistently emphasized the need to guarantee its independence, resources, and effectiveness.

The protection of women and girls also remained a major concern in both cycles, particularly with regard to gender-based violence, domestic violence, and discrimination. Closely linked to this was the repeated focus on child, early, and forced marriage, with States urging Mozambique to strengthen legislation, enforcement mechanisms, and awareness campaigns to eliminate harmful traditional practices.

Recommendations particularly concerning persons with albinism, and more generally persons with disabilities, also persisted across both cycles, especially regarding discrimination, violence, killings, kidnappings, and the need for improved access to education, health care, and employment opportunities.

Furthermore, both cycles highlighted serious concerns about police abuse, torture, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, and extrajudicial killings, with repeated calls for

independent investigations, accountability, and improved human rights training for security forces. Prison conditions similarly remained a recurring issue, particularly overcrowding and the need for non-custodial measures and reforms to the justice system. In addition, freedom of expression and media freedom emerged repeatedly in both cycles, with recommendations calling for the protection of journalists, human rights defenders, and civil society organisations, as well as reforms to restrictive media legislation.

Finally, concerns relating to human trafficking and child labour continued across both review cycles, with States repeatedly urging Mozambique to strengthen anti-trafficking legislation, protect victims, combat child exploitation, and improve enforcement mechanisms. Overall, the repetition of these recommendations across the second and third cycles illustrates enduring structural and institutional challenges, as well as the slow pace of implementation of key human rights reforms.

The fourth UPR cycle reveals a strong continuity in the concerns raised by States, demonstrating that several human rights challenges remained unresolved over time. One of the most recurrent themes was again the ratification of outstanding international human rights treaties, with repeated recommendations urging Mozambique to accede to the Rome Statute of the ICC, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

Freedom of expression also remained a central concern, with recommendations consistently calling on Mozambique to protect journalists, human rights defenders, and civil society actors, reform restrictive media legislation, and guarantee freedom of the press and access to information.

In the fourth cycle, however, these concerns became more urgent due to the deteriorating security situation in Cabo Delgado, where States increasingly focused on civilian protection, humanitarian access, accountability for abuses committed by security forces and armed groups, and compliance with international humanitarian law. Gender-based violence continued to feature prominently, particularly domestic violence, sexual violence, harmful traditional practices, and the need to strengthen protection and support mechanisms for women and girls victims of sexual violence. Similarly, children's rights remained a repeated issue, with recommendations emphasising the need for the elimination of child marriage, child labour, trafficking in children, school dropout rates, and the protection of children affected by armed conflict. The rights of persons with disabilities and persons with albinism also demonstrated continuity, as States repeatedly urged Mozambique to combat discrimination and violence, strengthen legal protections, improve accessibility and inclusion, and address attacks against persons with albinism. Human trafficking likewise persisted as a major concern, with repeated calls to strengthen anti-trafficking legislation, protect victims, combat trafficking in persons and children, and improve implementation of national action plans.

Finally, prison conditions and the justice system remained recurring themes in the fourth cycle, particularly concerns relating to overcrowded detention facilities, arbitrary

detention, lack of due process, torture, ill-treatment, and the need for broader judicial and criminal justice reforms. Overall, it can be concluded that the strong repetition of these recommendations highlights enduring structural challenges and indicates that progress in implementing key human rights reforms has remained limited or uneven. As the implementation of these recommendations proves to be the central issue, one wonders whether these recommendations have effectively been addressing the root causes of Mozambique’s recurrent issues, and whether their implementation mechanisms have produced practical and measurable outcomes that can serve as a lesson for future commitments.

#### **IV. Exhaustive Summary of the 4th Universal Periodic Review Cycle**



During Mozambique’s fourth UPR cycle, the dialogue reflected a relatively active engagement by the reviewed State, whose delegation presented a detailed overview of legislative reforms, institutional developments, and ongoing policy initiatives. Mozambique appeared open to criticism to a certain extent, particularly by acknowledging persistent challenges such as post-electoral violence since 2024, violent extremism in the Cabo Delgado province, restrictions affecting journalists and civic space, gender-based violence, climate change, and policy limitations for the protection of vulnerable groups. The delegation also referred to ongoing investigations into abuses committed by security forces and emphasised cooperation with international organisations and treaty bodies, suggesting an effort to

demonstrate accountability and responsiveness rather than adopting a purely defensive posture.

At the same time, the interventions by Member States showed that Mozambique was subjected to meaningful scrutiny on several important issues. While many delegations welcomed Mozambique's institutional progress and constructive cooperation with international partners, a large number of States raised concerns regarding accountability, civic freedoms, and the protection of vulnerable groups, particularly women and children. Indeed, numerous recommendations called for stronger measures to combat gender-based violence, child marriage, trafficking, and sexual exploitation, as well as policies promoting women's participation in decision-making and economic life. States also encouraged Mozambique to improve access to healthcare, education, and social protection, especially for women in rural areas, teenage mothers, victims of sexual violence, internally displaced persons, and children affected by armed conflict.

Additionally, particular attention was given to allegations of arbitrary detention, unlawful killings, attacks against journalists, shrinking civic space, and the need for transparent and independent investigations into human rights violations. Countries such as Australia, Austria, Belgium, and the United Kingdom placed stronger emphasis on accountability mechanisms, freedom of expression, and safeguards against abuses by security forces, indicating that these concerns remain central within the international community's assessment of Mozambique's human rights situation.

Climate change and sustainable development also emerged as significant themes throughout the review. Several delegations encouraged Mozambique to strengthen disaster risk reduction capacities, finalise environmental and climate policies, improve food security, and integrate climate resilience into development planning. These recommendations reflected international recognition of Mozambique's vulnerability to environmental crises and their impact on economic and social rights, particularly with regards to affected marginalised communities. At the same time, multiple States encouraged continued reforms in governance, anti-corruption efforts, justice administration, and the implementation of national human rights frameworks and action plans.

Overall, the review suggested that Member States engaged with Mozambique's human rights situation in a relatively substantive manner rather than limiting themselves to symbolic participation. Although many recommendations followed familiar UPR patterns and diplomatic language, the repeated focus on accountability, civic freedoms, gender-based violence, climate resilience, and the humanitarian consequences of the conflict in Cabo Delgado demonstrated common international concern regarding structural and ongoing human rights challenges in the country.

## **V. Recommendations Section**

### **Accountability, Rule of Law, and Civic Space**

With regard to accountability, rule of law, and civic space, it was recommended to Mozambique to conduct transparent, independent, and effective investigations into allegations of human rights violations, arbitrary detention, unlawful killings, and abuses committed by security forces. In relation to this, recommendations referred to the strengthening of oversight and accountability mechanisms within defence and security institutions. Another key recommendation referred to the protection of journalists, human rights defenders, and civic space, and to guarantee freedom of expression, association, and media independence. States further encouraged Mozambique to strengthen access to justice for victims of sexual and gender-based violence, continue reforms modernising the justice system and improving judicial administration, and strengthening anti-corruption legal and institutional frameworks. Lastly, States urged Mozambique to increase training for public officials involved in justice administration and law enforcement, and incorporate human rights standards into counterterrorism and security operations, particularly in Cabo Delgado.

### **Women's Rights and Gender Equality**

On the topic of women and gender equality, States urged Mozambique to strengthen measures to combat gender-based violence, femicide, and the sexual trafficking of women and girls, and to expand survivor-centered support services and mechanisms for victims of gender-based violence. Recommendations also focused on the need to increase women's participation in decision-making processes and Mozambique's political life, as well as to promote women's economic empowerment and inclusion in the labour market. Furthermore, it was recommended that Mozambique strengthen access to land rights and economic opportunities for women, to expand healthcare access for women, especially in rural areas. Finally, Member States recommended that Mozambique focuses on awareness campaigns addressing harmful practices affecting women and girls.

### **Child Protection and Children's Rights**

In the sphere of child protection and children's rights, States urged Mozambique to prevent and eliminate child marriage and early unions through stronger enforcement measures.

Key recommendations also included the improvement of school reintegration policies for teenage mothers, and the strengthening of child protection systems and increased investment in child protection services.

In addition, States reminded Mozambique that stronger efforts were required to efficiently combat trafficking in children, child labour, forced prostitution, and online exploitation. They also emphasized the need to reinforce measures against cybercrime targeting children.

Furthermore, Member States deemed essential for Mozambique to improve their birth registration and civil registration systems and to guarantee safe access to education, including through the implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration.

Finally, States further encouraged Mozambique to expand access to education and improve transition rates to secondary education to help create more inclusive and equitable opportunities for all children and young people.

### **Persons with Disabilities**

Mozambique was recommended to strengthen inclusive education for children with disabilities, while also improving accessibility in public infrastructure and services.

States further urged the State to implement and operationalise disability legislation and national disability plans, align domestic legislation with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, increase awareness and institutional capacity regarding disability rights, and lastly, strengthen protections and inclusion policies for persons with albinism.

### **Internally Displaced Persons, Refugees, and Migrants**

Mozambique was recommended to strengthen their national framework and policies on internal displacement. Indeed, Member States insisted that protection-centered responses must be ensured for internally displaced persons affected by conflict and climate-related disasters, with particular attention given to their safety, dignity, and basic rights.

Member States emphasized that efforts should also focus on improving access to documentation, essential services, healthcare, and education for displaced communities in order to promote inclusion and reduce vulnerability.

States reminded the Mozambican delegation that protection and assistance measures for migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers should be enhanced to ensure humane treatment and access to legal and social support.

Moreover, they highlighted the importance of accelerating refugee status determination and naturalization procedures in order to provide greater security and stability for affected individuals.

In addition, Member States reminded Mozambique that their national legislation should be aligned with the African Union Kampala Convention so as to strengthen the protection and rights of internally displaced persons in accordance with regional and international standards.

### **Climate Change, Environment, and Disaster Risk Reduction**

Mozambique was recommended to strengthen local capacities for disaster risk reduction while integrating climate resilience into reconstruction and development planning to ensure long-term preparedness.

Recommendations also tackled the fact that Mozambique's environmental and sustainability policies should be finalised, alongside improvements in climate governance and environmental legal frameworks, in order to create coherent and effective action on climate and environmental challenges. Finally, recommendations highlighted that Mozambique's efforts should focus on strengthening climate resilience plans and food security measures, supported by expanded climate financing and adaptation initiatives. Ultimately, all of these actions should contribute to protecting the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.

### **Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights**

Mozambique was recommended to reinforce healthcare systems and expand access to health services, while also improving social protection programs and poverty reduction policies to reduce inequality and support vulnerable populations. Many recommendations highlighted that expanding access to education and inclusive development initiatives is essential to ensure equal opportunities and long-term social progress. Recommendations also referred to ensuring access to safe water and sanitation services as a basic requirement for dignity and public health, while prioritising the implementation of economic development policies that promote social inclusion. Ultimately, States underlined that these measures taken all together should be able to ensure protection of the right to development for all sectors of society.

### **Counterterrorism and Security**

On the topic of counterterrorism, Mozambique was recommended to continue efforts to combat terrorism and violent extremism in Cabo Delgado, while ensuring that all security operations comply with international human rights standards. At the same time, legal frameworks governing defence and security actions should be strengthened to guarantee accountability and adherence to the rule of law. Particular attention, States recommended, must be given to protecting civilians and other vulnerable populations in conflict-affected regions, ensuring their safety and access to essential assistance. In parallel, support should be provided for reintegration and rehabilitation programs for populations affected by armed conflict.

### **International Cooperation and Human Rights Commitments**

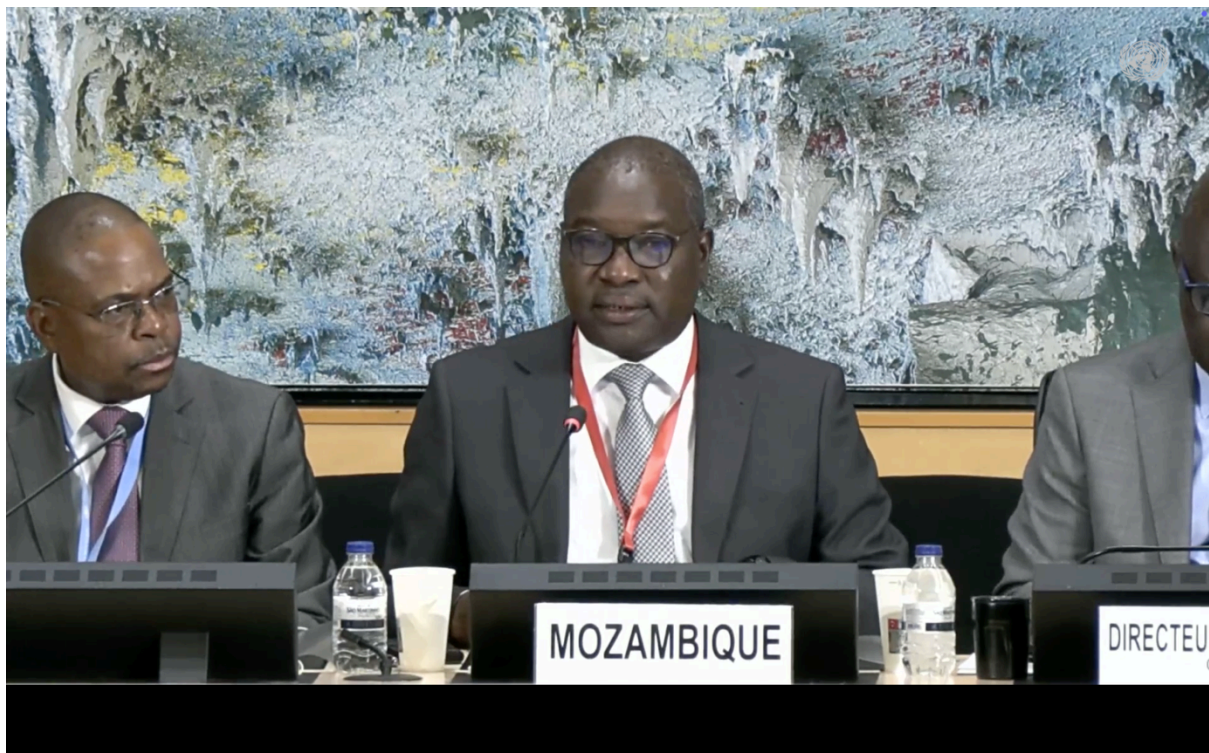
It was recommended that Mozambique should continue cooperation with UN agencies and international partners while continuing constructive engagement with international and regional human rights mechanisms.

Moreover, Mozambique was encouraged to ratify outstanding international human rights instruments, including the Convention on Enforced Disappearances. States also recommended that Mozambique develop and implement national human rights action plans, in alignment with the Paris Principles, and strengthen their National Human Rights Commission and related institutions to ensure effective promotion and protection of human rights at the national level.

### **Governance and Institutional Reform**

On the topic of governance and institutional reforms, Mozambique was encouraged to strengthen institutional and legal frameworks for human rights protection while improving democratic governance and advancing decentralisation to bring decision-making closer to citizens. At the same time, it was recommended that Mozambique should expand access to public services and pursue administrative reforms. In parallel, national institutional capacities should be built to monitor and respond effectively to human rights violations, ensuring timely and credible action. Finally, coordination mechanisms for implementing international human rights obligations should be strengthened to ensure coherent follow-up and full compliance with global commitments.

### **VI. Closing Remarks by the Representative of Mozambique**



During their review before the working group of the UPR, the government of Mozambique reaffirmed its commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights, emphasising its

adherence to the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, international human rights instruments, and international humanitarian law. The delegation underscored the importance of multilateralism and international cooperation in addressing human rights challenges and highlighted several major issues affecting the country, including violent extremism in Cabo Delgado, large-scale internal displacement, the recruitment and use of children by armed groups, climate change, and post-electoral violence following the October 2024 elections. According to the Government, these challenges have significantly affected livelihoods, access to services, and the enjoyment of fundamental rights, particularly for women, children, and other vulnerable groups. Mozambique also noted that an inclusive national dialogue was underway to address the causes of post-electoral unrest and strengthen confidence in democratic institutions.

In presenting its National Report, Mozambique highlighted progress in strengthening its legal and institutional human rights framework through legislative reforms, ratification of regional and international instruments, and the adoption of national strategies relating to internal displacement, climate change, counterterrorism, inclusive education, healthcare, social inclusion, and the prevention of violent extremism. The delegation referred to the establishment of the Inter-Ministerial Commission for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law under Presidential Decree No. 6/2022, as well as reforms aimed at modernising the justice system, decentralisation, and improving access to public services.

Mozambique also emphasised policies protecting vulnerable groups, including older persons, women and girls, persons with disabilities, and children affected by armed conflict. The protection of vulnerable groups was presented as a constitutional and governmental priority. Mozambique highlighted the ratification of the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa and ongoing efforts to strengthen legal protections for older persons. The Government also referred to measures combating gender-based violence, femicide, and early unions and marriages, including awareness campaigns, economic empowerment initiatives, and the Provincial Plan to Combat Early Unions (2025–2035). Regarding persons with disabilities, Mozambique pointed to Act No. 10/2024, which establishes a framework promoting inclusive education, healthcare, employment, and public services, alongside measures promoting sign language, Braille education, rehabilitation services, and accessibility.

Mozambique further outlined measures to protect and reintegrate children affected by armed conflict. The Government condemned the recruitment and use of children by armed groups and referred to the adoption of a National Plan to Prevent and Respond to Child Recruitment. In cooperation with UNICEF and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Mozambique has implemented training programs for defence and security forces, community awareness campaigns, and support initiatives for rescued children, including psychosocial assistance, family reunification, and vocational training. The delegation also highlighted efforts to establish mechanisms implementing the Handover and Referral

Protocol for children associated with armed conflict, aligned with the Paris and Vancouver Principles.

The Government reiterated its commitment to international human rights obligations, including the ratification of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and accession to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Mozambique also noted the signing of an agreement to establish a country office of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), further strengthening cooperation with the United Nations system and international partners, including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the ICRC.

In the field of business and human rights, Mozambique highlighted the drafting of a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights (2026–2030), based on the United Nations Guiding Principles, aimed at strengthening corporate accountability and access to remedies. The Government also referred to its participation in the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights Initiative and ongoing efforts to regulate private security companies in accordance with international human rights standards.

On civil and political rights, Mozambique recalled the holding of local elections in 2023 and general elections in 2024 as evidence of continued democratic participation and political pluralism. While acknowledging episodes of post-electoral violence and cases involving disproportionate use of force by security forces, the Government stated that criminal proceedings had been initiated and that training programs for police and security forces were being strengthened with the support of international partners. Mozambique also acknowledged ongoing challenges relating to the protection of journalists, freedom of expression, and freedom of association, while noting the country's hard work on legal frameworks for media and broadcasting.

Environmental rights were also emphasised as a key component of sustainable development and human rights protection. Mozambique highlighted its vulnerability to cyclones, floods, and droughts and referred to the review of environmental legislation and the adoption of the National Climate Financing Strategy 2025–2034 to strengthen resilience and support the transition to a low-carbon economy. Despite persistent structural challenges, including poverty and informal employment, Mozambique reaffirmed its commitment to expanding access to education, healthcare, water, social protection, and inclusive development initiatives.

## **VII. Looking Forward: New Priorities of the International Community and Commitments of Mozambique**

The recommendations discussed by Mozambique during its review for the fourth cycle of the UPR indicate that the State is likely to prioritise institutional reform, the protection of vulnerable groups, climate resilience, and the strengthening of accountability mechanisms

over the coming years. The Government demonstrated willingness to continue cooperating with international human rights mechanisms and accepted recommendations aimed at improving access to justice, combating gender-based violence and child marriage, protecting internally displaced persons, and expanding inclusive education and healthcare. Mozambique also appeared committed to reinforcing democratic governance and integrating human rights into security operations, particularly in the context of counterterrorism efforts in the Cabo Delgado province.

The representative of Mozambique highlighted several institutional and legal initiatives intended to address these concerns, including the establishment of the Inter-Ministerial Commission for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law, the National Action Plan for Internally Displaced Persons (2025–2029), the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights (2026–2030), and reforms modernising the justice system through online judicial procedures. Additional projects included the adoption of Act No. 10/2024 on the rights of persons with disabilities, the Provincial Plan to Combat Early Unions (2025–2035), climate financing and environmental governance strategies, and the creation of mechanisms for the protection and reintegration of children affected by armed conflict. These initiatives suggest that Mozambique seeks to frame its human rights agenda around institutional strengthening, social inclusion, and cooperation with international partners.

Nevertheless, many of the structural challenges identified during the fourth cycle are likely to remain central issues during the fifth cycle of the UPR. The persistence of insecurity and violent extremist activities in Cabo Delgado, large-scale internal displacement, poverty, weak infrastructure, and climate vulnerability may continue to hinder the effective implementation of reforms and the full realisation of economic and social rights. There is reason to believe that there could be a recurrent risk that security gains may be fragile and futile if not accompanied by sustained investments in socioeconomic development, inclusive governance, accountability, and community resilience. The gap between security-focused interventions and the broader structural conditions that contribute to instability may continue to undermine the full realization of economic and social rights in the region, and the country at large. Concerns relating to accountability for the abuses committed by security forces and the restrictions affecting journalists and civic space are likely to reappear if concrete and measurable progress is not achieved in the short term. When discussing gender-based violence, child marriage, and the protection of vulnerable groups, short-term solutions are not the appropriate answer. Such issues that stem from systemic oppression need solutions that rely on a gradual dismantling of embedded social structures and institutions that aim to marginalize these vulnerable groups.

Although Mozambique presented itself as relatively open to dialogue and reform, many recommendations reflected longstanding concerns already raised in previous review cycles, suggesting that implementation gaps remain significant. As a result, the review of the fifth UPR cycle will likely continue to focus on the effectiveness of institutional reforms, the

practical enforcement of human rights protections, the independence of oversight mechanisms, and the State's capacity to balance security concerns with respect for fundamental freedoms and the rule of law.

### **VIII. Critical Reflections on Mozambique's Fourth Universal Periodic Review Cycle**

A careful analysis of Mozambique's fourth UPR cycle documents shows that, while the process provided a broad overview of the country's human rights situation, certain areas may not have been explored in sufficient depth. The National Report strongly emphasised legislative reforms, institutional initiatives, and strategic plans, presenting an image of gradual progress and constructive engagement with international human rights standards. However, what appeared to be lacking was a genuine assessment of implementation and accountability. The Report repeatedly referenced action plans, legal frameworks, and national strategies, yet offered very limited statistical evidence, independent evaluations, or concrete indicators demonstrating whether these measures had improved the realities of the affected populations. Human rights violations linked to the conduct of security forces in Cabo Delgado and during the post-electoral unrest of October 2024 were acknowledged only superficially, often framed as isolated incidents rather than symptoms of deeper institutional weaknesses.

There was also very little reflection on structural corruption, political patronage, unequal distribution of resources, or the broader climate of intimidation affecting journalists, activists, opposition actors, and local communities. Sensitive issues such as prison conditions, police violence, enforced disappearances, surveillance practices, and discrimination against LGBTQIA+ persons were either absent or treated in extremely vague language. This selective presentation gives the impression that the Report is intended more to highlight the State's formal commitments and progress than to provide a fully critical assessment of ongoing human rights challenges. For example, the role of foreign military actors, private security companies, and multinational extractive industries operating in Cabo Delgado received relatively limited scrutiny despite longstanding allegations that economic interests and security operations are deeply interconnected in this fragile region. Likewise, there was insufficient attention to how poverty, exclusion, regional inequalities, and weak governance create conditions that fuel both violent extremism and human rights abuses, which can clearly be demonstrated in the Cabo Delgado province.

The humanitarian consequences of displacement were discussed extensively, yet less attention was devoted to the political responsibilities behind displacement or the failures of long-term reintegration strategies. The UN assessment itself reflected the cautious and diplomatic character of the UPR system, often relying on neutral language such as "continue efforts" or "strengthen frameworks" instead of explicitly naming institutional failures or patterns of abuse. As a result, the seriousness of certain violations may become less visible when they are presented primarily through technical or procedural language. However,

because the process is based on peer review between governments, recommendations often remain diplomatic and broadly framed. States frequently focus on encouraging reforms and technical cooperation rather than directly criticising one another, which can sometimes limit deeper discussions of politically sensitive issues or systemic challenges. Recommendations therefore tend to emphasise the strengthening of legal frameworks, institutional capacities, and policy implementation rather than addressing questions of political responsibility in explicit terms.

Consequently, many recommendations become repetitive, vague, and non-confrontational, focusing on legislative reforms and technical cooperation rather than demanding accountability for concrete, and serious, violations. States can therefore present extensive lists of laws, policies, and future plans while avoiding serious scrutiny regarding implementation, impunity, or political responsibility. Mozambique's review illustrates this dynamic clearly: despite recurring concerns over abuses by security forces, attacks on journalists, child marriage, and weak judicial accountability across several review cycles, discussions often revolved around future commitments rather than measurable outcomes. While Civil Society submissions and UN stakeholder reports help counterbalance official narratives, they are constrained by page limits, funding limitations, security concerns, and unequal access to international platforms. In countries where journalists and activists face intimidation or surveillance, as in the case of Mozambique, entire categories of abuses may remain undocumented or underreported. The UPR therefore risks rewarding performative compliance, where the adoption of strategies, commissions, and action plans is treated as evidence of progress even when structural conditions remain largely unchanged.

## **IX. GICJ Position**

**Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ)** acknowledges Mozambique's continued engagement with the UPR process and welcomes the progress achieved since the second and third cycles, particularly in strengthening its legislative and institutional framework for the protection of human rights. GICJ recognises the adoption of laws and strategies concerning internally displaced persons, persons with disabilities, children affected by armed conflict, gender equality, climate governance, and access to justice, as well as Mozambique's cooperation with UN mechanisms and international partners.

However, GICJ remains particularly concerned by the persistent gap between formal commitments and effective implementation. GICJ is especially alarmed by reports of excessive use of force, arbitrary detention, attacks against journalists and civic actors, gender-based violence, child marriage, and the ongoing humanitarian impact of conflict and displacement caused by Islamist insurgencies in the Cabo Delgado province.

While Mozambique has adopted important reforms, structural challenges such as weak accountability mechanisms, socio-economic inequalities, insecurity, and climate vulnerability

continue to limit progress. GICJ stresses the urgent need for stronger judicial independence, transparent investigations into human rights violations, greater oversight of security forces, and more effective protection of vulnerable groups and fundamental freedoms. Lastly, GICJ strongly calls for the elimination of corruption, the key cause for the grave human rights violations in the country.

GICJ further supports recommendations calling for enhanced accountability, protection of journalists and human rights defenders, stronger measures against child marriage and gender-based violence, improved protection for internally displaced persons and children affected by armed conflict, expanded inclusive education and healthcare, and the ratification and implementation of key international human rights instruments.

## X. Sources

### NGOs Articles:

Amnesty International. (n.d.). *Mozambique 2020 Archives*. [online] Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/africa/southern-africa/mozambique/report-mozambique>.

BTI 2026. (2026). *BTI 2026 Mozambique Country Report*. [online] Available at: <https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/MOZ#pos2>

Freedom House. (n.d.). *Mozambique: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report*. [online] Available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/mozambique/freedom-world/2024>.

Human Rights Watch. (2021). *Mozambique: Hundred of Women, Girls Abducted*. [online] Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/12/07/mozambique-hundreds-women-girls-abducted>

Human Rights Watch. (2025). *World Report 2026: Rights Trends in Mozambique*. [online] Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2026/country-chapters/mozambique>.

### Academic Articles:

Herd, C.S. and Christianson, J. (2023). Mozambique: A Nation of Unrealized Potential. *www.csis.org*. [online] Available at: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/mozambique-nation-unrealized-potential>.

Kumar, R. (2025). *Navigating Political Crisis and Conflict in Mozambique: Quad's Interest and Strategy - Foreign Policy Research Institute*. [online] Foreign Policy Research Institute. Available at: <https://www.fpri.org/article/2025/05/navigating-political-crisis-and-conflict-in-mozambique-quads-interest-and-strategy/>.

### United Nations Documents:

United States Department of State. (2023). *Mozambique - United States Department of State*. [online] Available at: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/mozambique/>.

United Nations Human Rights Council (2026). *National report submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 5/1 and 16/21: Mozambique*. A/HRC/WG.6/52/MOZ/1. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/WG.6/52/MOZ/1>

United Nations Human Rights Council (2026). *Compilation of information prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: Mozambique*. A/HRC/WG.6/52/MOZ/2. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/WG.6/52/MOZ/2>

United Nations Human Rights Council (2026). *Summary of stakeholders' submissions on Mozambique*. A/HRC/WG.6/52/MOZ/3. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/WG.6/52/MOZ/3>

