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Policy Brief Northern Mozambique

“Political exploitation gave way to an economic colonialism that was equally enslaving. As a result, this country, massively plundered, has not benefited adequately from its immense resources. It is a tragedy that these lands, and more generally the whole African continent, continue to endure various forms of exploitation. The poison of greed has smeared its diamonds with blood. Hands off the Democratic Republic of the Congo! Hands off Africa! Stop choking Africa: it is not a mine to be stripped or a terrain to be plundered.” Pope Francis in Kinshasa, 2 February 2023.

Colonial continuities

“The basic confrontation which seemed to be colonialism versus anti-colonialism, indeed capitalism versus socialism, is already losing its importance. What matters today, the issue, which blocks the horizon, is the need for a redistribution of wealth. Humanity will have to address this question, no matter how devastating the consequences may be.”

Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

The current situation in northern Mozambique is a nightmare where extraction has led and will continue to lead to suffering and devastation if it is not stopped. Mining and fossil fuel extraction have been strongly linked to land grabbing, loss of homes and livelihoods, mass displacement, sexual assault, climate change, war, environmental destruction and economic ruin. Colonization, and the injustices relating to land, climate and human rights, are deeply intertwined, and the fight against one of these must be the fight against all.

During Mozambique’s colonial period, colonizer Portugal struggled to rule and control all of what is today’s territory of Mozambique. Parts of the north and center of the country were therefore leased to external commercial enterprises, so-called concession companies. Their primary interest was to exploit the country’s natural resources, which, still remains the case until today. After decades of colonialism, Mozambique gained national independence in 1975, led by the liberation movement FRELIMO (Liberation Front of Mozambique) which took over the leadership of the state, obtaining total control of power, including the spaces for civic political activities and those of faith-based and traditional leadership. The latter were seen as feudal structures from the perspective of the party’s Marxist-Leninist orientation. Apart from formally liberating the country from colonial power, FRELIMO, in the name of modernization, was also instrumental in marginalizing or oppressing both rival elites and the ‘uneducated’ peasantry. The nature of the now independent African nation state and its relationship to civil society were accepted as unquestionable postulates, this included the state apparatus as the privileged tool for transforming Mozambican society and the understanding of the state as an administrative

entity separate from the rest of Mozambican society rather than as a result of struggles rooted in class conflict within civil society.

Frelimo's power, which was seriously challenged by a bloody civil war from 1977 – 1992, accompanied by famine and new waves of deep poverty, was soon put under pressure from countries of the Global North to agree on neoliberal structural adjustment programmes in return for debt relief and humanitarian aid. The already existing tension between the state and its 'citizens' during colonial times, was deepened. Accordingly, the anti-colonial liberation movement and later political party FRELIMO truly aligned with the nation state, reproduced the gap between the peasantry and that of the state, putting itself into a hegemonial position. However, in practice, even though not fitting FRELIMO's picture of a modern non-ethnic state, traditional authorities still provided social, religious and spiritual leadership and a moral foundation during a time of growing inequalities and poverty, in particular where lineage relationships and religious cohesion were intact during and after colonial times.

Postcolonial scramble for Mozambican resources, inequality and resistance

From the 1990s onwards, immense deposits of natural resources such as gold, rubies, graphite and natural gas have been discovered causing a boom within the mining industry. Until 2015, Mozambique experienced more than ten years of economic growth and finally presented itself as a donor darling as far as economic development was concerned. Nevertheless, a debt crisis and in particular growing social, economic and political inequalities, mainly affecting the center-north of the country, where most of the natural resources are located, were never effectively addressed, leading to the fact that the Province of Cabo Delgado shows the lowest HDI with only 0,391. This shows that the positive economic impact of mega projects have only limited impact on local employment opportunities and infrastructure if at all. Eventually, new grassroots solidarities, often led by spiritual and religious leadership, constituting civil society dynamics 'from below', abandoned by legalized NGOs in the country's Southern capital Maputo, emerged. These solidarities and struggles against inequalities based on unjust access to resources carried the potential for catalyzing social transformation and would eventually lead to an armed insurgency in the province of Cabo Delgado.

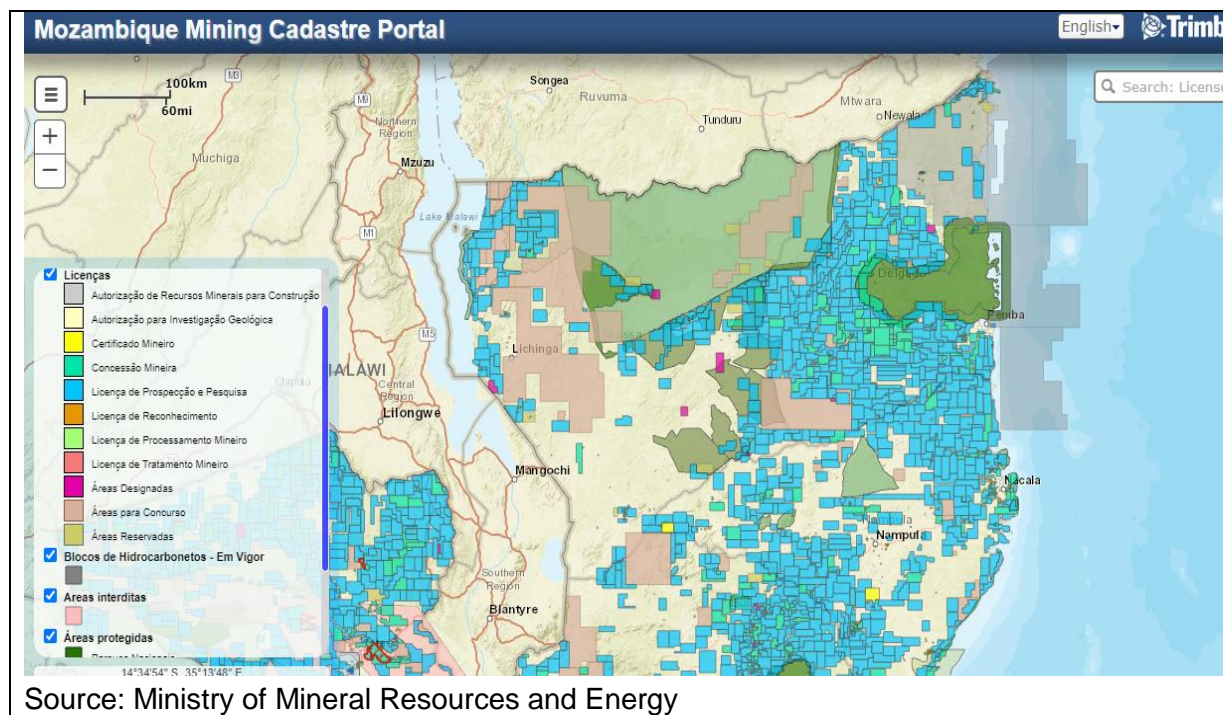
Today's siege of the civilian population due to economic exploitation

In 2006, when one of the world's largest deposits of liquid natural gas was discovered in the Rovuma Basin off the coast of Cabo Delgado, a new war became the major destabilizing factor in the country, spreading to the southern parts of Cabo Delgado, and into Nampula Province. The conflict was consistently reported to be by Islamic Jihad groups supported by ISIS. But analysts and victims of the conflicts say the war is about control of land and mineral resources. Local populations are driven off their land to make way for prospectors and multinational corporations. In an interview with academic and researcher Yussuf Adam he said that displaced people told him, the objective is "serving to exile them from their lands without paying them

compensation.”¹ The precedent set in Montepuez and other places makes it difficult to refute these reports.

Their suspicions are not without justification. All land in Mozambique belongs to the State. Those occupying the land are given a “permission to occupy”, known by the Portuguese acronym “DUAT”. The State can withdraw the DUAT of the current occupant at will, and give it to another entity, without giving reasons and without compensation. The obligatory community consultation is often done in a very superficial way or suspended at all. Many studies exist which provide overwhelming evidence that the system does not work, leading regularly to violent land conflicts and forced displacement.

A map released by the Mozambican government shows which land has been given on concession to prospectors, investors and mining companies.² Below is a screenshot. It shows that the entire Cabo Delgado (except for nature conservation areas) as well as the entire Nampula Province (with the exception of the areas around Nampula City) has been given to prospectors and investors. On the map below, all the blue areas are mining and prospecting concessions. The map is interactive – on the website, by clicking on a specific concession, it says whom the concession has been granted to.



¹ Personal Interview 28 May 2021

² The map can be found at <https://portals.landfolio.com/mozambique/pt/>

Massive forced displacement and human suffering

The implications are disturbing. Extreme violence has led to ever growing displacement with devastating impact on the majority of the population of the war affected region. People have witnessed their loved ones being killed, beheaded, and raped, and their houses and other infrastructure burned to the ground. Men and boys have also been forcibly enrolled in armed groups. Livelihoods have been lost, and education stalled while access to necessities such as food and healthcare has been hampered. Many people have been re-traumatized after being forced to move multiple times to save their lives. Tropical storm Ana in February 2022 further increased the number of climate related displacements, leading to an overall increase in numbers of internally displaced people to 946,508 in the first half of 2022 (broad estimate as solid statistics and registration system is not available). The conflict has now spilled into the neighboring province of Nampula, which witnessed four attacks by armed groups in September 2021 affecting at least 47,000 people and displacing 12,000 (UNHCR 2022). Hence, the about 1.000.000,00 forcibly displaced people are victims of a multiple crisis caused by extraction, economic exploitation, environmental disaster as well as failed government and donor social-economic policies which intersect, having a local, national and global dimension. By now the war in Northern Mozambique is seen as one of the most complex conflicts in Africa and beyond.

Displaced people interviewed as part of a psycho-social and livelihood support project with integrated participatory action research in Nampula Province in 2022 reported that they are still scared and hungry after their flight from the war zone Cabo Delgado. They shared with us their main concerns which relate to the suffering of war exposure (observation of extreme violence, beheadings, violent recruitment of youth into armed groups etc.), suffering of loss (social networks, spiritual disturbance as killed family members can't be buried during flight and economic means of livelihoods and any income generation occupation), as well as suffering in the present (insufficient food rations in camps, almost zero food distribution as well as livelihood recovery and psycho-social support to internally displaced people (IDPs) living outside camp structures, which are about 85% of people forced to move). Families receiving displaced people outside the war zone are themselves often living at the edge of poverty and have little to share whilst traditional self-help mechanisms are no longer functioning. This is among others the result of a top-down civil society model which was promoted in Mozambique since the 1990s, privileging Western-type NGO service delivery to compensate gaps in government services, rather than group and community based solidarity strategies and political education. The rainy season has the potential to further deteriorate the health situation of IDPs that live outside camps and local family reception systems. In precarious huts which will fall apart with rain and tropical storms opening doors to cholera and other illnesses. This scenario is already a human disaster created by political and economic forces that are ignorant to the needs of those living at the margins. Support provided by government, UN agencies and NGOs is altogether insufficient to confront the crisis, which is not only due to lack of humanitarian funding, but also lack of national and international political will for an inclusive and alternative development approach that can be called human and just.

The entire population of Cabo Delgado, and most of the rural population of Nampula Province, will eventually have to be moved, to make way for prospectors and mining. Reports have been received of displaced persons from the north of Cabo Delgado who have had their DUATs cancelled when they arrived in Pemba, in order to free these areas for extractive projects. Further reports were received of displaced persons arriving in Nampula. When they are issued with new DUATs, they are told to say that they came from Pemba, not from Palma or Mocimboa da Praia. This means that they will never be able to return to their places of origin, even if the fighting stops.

Who stands to profiteer from this massive land grab?

A study published by the Center for Public Integrity (CPI) concluded that Raimundo Domingos Pachinuapa, a veteran of the national liberation struggle and a Frelimo member, and Asghar Fakhraleali hold the largest number of mining concessions in Cabo Delgado province. Overall, the study looks for the real “lords of mining exploration licenses in Cabo Delgado” and found that the company Mwiriti Mining, Limitada, legally owned by Raimundo Domingos Pachinuapa (60%) and Asghar Fakhraleali (40%), presents as the company with the largest number of mining concessions in Cabo Delgado (7%).³

“The second company with the largest concessions, 4% of the total, is Cabo Delgado Inertes e Minerais, Sociedade Unipessoal, Limitada, owned by Macara Samido. Concessions from Mwiriti Mining (Ltd) are intended for the exploration of gold in the district of Montepuez and the concessions of Cabo Delgado Inertes and Minerals, Sociedade Unipessoal, Limitada are intended for the exploration of construction stone and sand in the districts of Palma, Mecufi, Pemba and Metuge”, reports the study. However, CIP’s investigation noted that Mwiriti Mining has indirect stakes in other projects, such as the exploration of rubies, through Montepuez Ruby Mining. There are 113 mining concessions in Cabo Delgado, held by 83 companies. Of the total concessions, the report states that the company Mwiriti Mining Limitada holds eight mining concessions, which means that it alone controls 7% of the total concessions in the province of Cabo Delgado.⁴ There was a sharp increase in the number of licenses granted for mining projects in Cabo Delgado in the last four years. In the 14 years prior to the attacks in the province, 67 licenses were granted - an average of five per year. On the other hand, only from 2017 to February 2021, in the midst of armed conflict, 46 mining projects were licensed – more than double the average number of concessions in the “years of peace”. Compared to the previous 14 years, the number of concessions increased by 68% in the four years of attacks. A considerable number of the companies identified have their tax domicile in Mauritius, which is a tax haven in SADC. This is even the case of companies Mwiriti Mining (Ltd), owned by Raimundo Domingos Pachinuapa and Asghar Fakhraleali with registration outside Mozambique. A large part of the mining concessions in Cabo Delgado is in the hands of three companies,

³ <https://www.cipmoz.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Quanto-e-como-gasta-o-Estado-com-a-guerra-de-CaboDelgado-1.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.cipmoz.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Quanto-e-como-gasta-o-Estado-com-a-guerra-de-CaboDelgado-1.pdf>

whose beneficial ownership was not possible to identify. "Of the 113 mining concessions in the province, 7% belong to the company Nairoto Resources, 5% to Gemfields Mauritius, and 4% are held by Kukwira." The first two companies are registered in Mauritius, the last one was registered in Mozambique.

As of May 2022 a minimum of 24 countries have sent forces to Mozambique. Foreign military, such as the Rwandan troops, came in because France has an investment worth millions of US\$ in Cabo Delgado. Though there is no evidence that the US has troops on the ground, they gave the insurgents the label of the Islamic State, making what is happening a matter of their interest while trying to keep Russia off the field. The latter needs our special attention since the war between Russia and the Ukraine – the east and the west – broke out on 24 February 2022.

ENI, TotalEnergies and ExxonMobil's \$50 billion investments⁵ in gas extraction are fueling the violent conflicts. The industry is constructing an onshore facilities park that has forced thousands of fishers and farmers off their land and left them without homes and livelihoods. Combat between military forces, rebel groups and foreign mercenaries have led to almost 1 million IDPs. African, EU and international assistance are militarizing the conflict while the local population remains exposed to violence and insecurity. The pursuit of a military solution fails to address the socio-economic situation and insecure land titles that cause the conflict. Local communities live in fear of increasing riots, militia attacks and harassments and violence from the Mozambican military in the context of attempts to evict tribal communities from their land. The acceleration of land confiscation, whether legal or illegal will result in fueling and spreading the conflict to other areas in the country.⁶

Impacts on climate, environment and economy

Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. "Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs". This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she "groans in travail" (Rom 8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her water." Pope Francis: Laudato Si par. 1 and 2

⁵ Dos Santos, Francisco Almeida (2020) War in resource-rich northern Mozambique – Six scenarios. Available from: <https://www.cmi.no/publications/7231-war-in-resource-rich-northern-mozambique-six-scenarios>

⁶ See interactive map with details on individual licences by Mozambique government at <https://portals.landfolio.com/mozambique/pt/>

Extraction and fossil fuel exploitation in Cabo Delgado, are irreversibly destructive to the climate, environment and wellbeing of the Mozambican economy. Mozambique is already highly susceptible to climate change and is already struggling with the severe impacts of drought, flooding and cyclones. The LNG projects will only further exacerbate climate change. Just one of the projects has the potential to result in a massive amount of greenhouse gas emissions, which could increase the whole of Mozambique's emissions by 14%, and the end use is equivalent to the total emissions from the aviation sector for the entire EU.

The gas industry will further devastate the economy of the already debt-ridden country, the total opposite of the 'gas for development' narrative from the industry. Billions of dollars will be lost due to tax avoidance, it would take at least 10 years for Mozambique to recover its costs, and the only ones who will profit will be the energy companies, financiers and wealthy governments involved like the US, UK, the Netherlands, Italy, China and France. Most of the gas is for export, so will not increase energy access for the local population, and no skilled employment will be created – during the construction phase of the onshore park, the jobs provided were temporary and unskilled.

The environmental impact both onshore and offshore will be devastating, as movement of ships, dredging, drilling, disposal of toxic waste and construction of massive infrastructure will cause irreversible habitat degradation and biodiversity loss, and the extinction of endangered wildlife and flora, including of the Quirimbas Archipelago, a UNESCO Biosphere.

Concluding thoughts and way forward

It is crucial to remember that land justice, climate justice and human rights are inseparable and deeply intertwined. The neocolonial exploitation we witness in countries such as Mozambique has reached a new dimension, which seems to be linked to the reduced availability of gas due to the Ukraine war. The Global North has to stop its imperialist appropriation of raw materials in the Global South in order for the deep global inequalities in economic governance and environmental destruction, both leading to massive human rights abuses on local poor and marginalized communities in already fragile countries, to stop.

It is against this backdrop that the long ongoing historical marginalization of people living in the center-north of Mozambique with its own traditional and spiritual leadership structures should be understood, the weakness of the Western-supported NGOs to play a more central role be interpreted and the role of religious civil society dynamics in social transformation of Mozambique be analyzed. The adaptation of a neoliberal market policy and the above escribed political economy emerging out of it, eventually contributed to increasing already existing economic, social and political inequalities between the country's southern and center-north regions, provoking a new war in Mozambique. Considering all this, it would be inappropriate and misleading to refer to an Islamist insurgency in Northern Mozambique. In doing so, we would only name what we see manifest on the surface of a highly complex context in which the political economy of development and interests of many stakeholders are interwoven,

influencing the conflict. We would also be silent about the impact of colonization and its continuation in Mozambique.

The call is to join the decolonizing and climate justice movement, to call for land and economic justice, political participation of those most affected by resource related conflicts and for a fossil free future, to Leave Fossil Fuels in the Ground and to Stop Gassing the African Continent.