

PRESS RELEASE

Children as young as 11 brutally murdered in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique – Save the Children

16 March, Maputo - Children as young as 11 are being beheaded in the Mozambique province of Cabo Delgado, Save the Children said, as conflict continues to displace thousands. The agency recently spoke to displaced families who reported horrifying scenes of murder and grief and the loss of loved ones.

One mother, Elsa*, 28, spoke of her eldest child, Filipe*, 12, being beheaded near to where she was hiding with her other three children. Elsa said:

“That night our village was attacked and houses were burned. When it all started, I was at home with my four children. We tried to escape to the woods, but they took my eldest son and beheaded him. We couldn’t do anything because we would be killed too.”

Nearly 670,000 people are now displaced inside Mozambique due to the conflict in Cabo Delgado – almost seven times the number reported a year ago[1]. At least 2,614 people have died in the conflict, including 1,312 civilians[2]. The situation has seriously deteriorated over the past 12 months, with the escalation of attacks on villages.

Cabo Delgado is also still reeling from consecutive climatic shocks, including 2019’s Cyclone Kenneth, the strongest cyclone to hit the northern part of Mozambique, and massive floods in early 2020.

Save the Children is outraged and deeply saddened by reports that children are being targeted in this conflict. Every child has the right to life and safety, and children must be protected under all circumstances, including war and armed conflicts. For the children who may have witnessed their siblings being murdered, their suffering could last for years. Many may experience anxiety and depression or even signs of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Amelia*, 29, is currently seeking shelter in her brother’s home with her three children. Her fourth child was 11 when he was murdered by armed men, and she says she is heartbroken because she didn’t have the chance to say goodbye or give her son a proper burial. Amelia said:

“After my 11-year-old son was killed, we understood that it was no longer safe to stay in my village. We fled to my father’s house in another village, but a few days later the attacks started there too. Me, my father and the children spent five days eating green bananas and drinking banana tree water until we got transport that brought us here.”

Chance Briggs, Save the Children’s Country Director in Mozambique, said:

“Reports of attacks on children sicken us to our core. Our staff have been brought to tears when hearing the stories of suffering told by mothers in displacement camps. This violence has to stop, and displaced families need to be supported as they find their bearings and recover from the trauma.”

“A major concern for us is that the needs of displaced children and their families in Cabo Delgado far outweigh the resources available to support them. Nearly a million people are facing severe hunger as a direct result of this conflict, including displaced people and host communities[3]. While the world was focused on COVID-19, the Cabo Delgado crisis ballooned but has been grossly overlooked. Humanitarian aid is desperately required, but not enough donors have prioritised assistance for those who have lost everything, even their children.

“Critically, all parties to this conflict must ensure that children are never targets. They must respect international humanitarian and human rights laws and take all necessary actions to minimise incidental civilian harm, including ending indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks against children.”

Save the Children is responding to the urgent needs of both conflict- and cyclone-displaced children and their families in Cabo Delgado. The organisation’s response has reached over 70,000 people, including over 50,000 children, with education, child protection, health (including COVID-19 measures), and water and sanitation programming.

**Names have been changed to protect identities*

[1] UNOCHA: [Nearly 670,000 people](#) were internally displaced in Cabo Delgado, Niassa and Nampula by the end of 2020. Almost 580,000 people uprooted from their homes in 2020 alone.

2 9 March 2021 <https://acleddata.com/2021/02/23/cabo-ligado-weekly-15-21-february-2021/>

3 Nearly 950,000 people in Cabo Delgado, Niassa and Nampula are facing severe hunger due to conflict and repeated displacement. Kindly see: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ROSEA_20210223_MOZ_Snapshot.pdf

Bei Interviewanfragen wenden Sie sich bitte an unsere Pressestelle.

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Über Save the Children

Im Nachkriegsjahr 1919 gründete die britische Sozialreformerin und Kinderrechtlerin Eglantyne Jebb Save the Children, um Kinder in Deutschland und Österreich vor dem Hungertod zu retten. Heute ist die inzwischen größte unabhängige Kinderrechtsorganisation der Welt in über 120 Ländern im Einsatz. Save the Children ist da für Kinder in Kriegen, Konflikten und Katastrophen – seit 100 Jahren und darüber hinaus. Diese Kinder zu schützen, zu stärken und zu fördern ist das zentrale Anliegen der Organisation. Die Schwerpunkte der Arbeit liegen in den Bereichen Schule und Bildung, Schutz vor Ausbeutung und Gewalt sowie Überleben und Gesundheit. Save the Children setzt sich ein für eine Welt, die die Rechte der Kinder achtet. Eine Welt, in der alle Kinder gesund und sicher leben und frei und selbstbestimmt aufwachsen können.