



NGO: EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR LAW AND JUSTICE (ECLJ)

**UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW
52ND SESSION**

**STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOZAMBIQUE
FOR THE 52ND SESSION OF THE
UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW**

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Introduction

1. The European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ) is a non-governmental organization dedicated to promoting and protecting human rights around the world. The ECLJ also holds Special Consultative status before the United Nations Economic and Social Council. This report discusses the status of human rights in the Republic of Mozambique (Mozambique) for the 52nd session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

Background

2. Mozambique is a country located in southeastern Africa and has a population of approximately 34 million people.¹ The majority of the population is Christian, with approximately 55.8% identifying as Christian, 26.1% belonging to ethnic religions, and 17.5% identifying as Muslim.² In its 2025 World Watch List, Open Doors ranked Mozambique as the 37th worst country for Christians because of violence being carried out against them by Islamic extremists.³

3. Mozambique's last review was held on May 4, 2021.⁴ As a result of the review, Mozambique received 266 recommendations, 236 of which it accepted.⁵ It was recommended by Spain, and supported by Mozambique, that the government "[a]dopt a comprehensive strategy against violent extremism based on the rule of law and the promotion and respect for human rights, including through the training of security and defence forces."⁶ It was also recommended by Luxembourg, and supported by Mozambique, that the government "[r]equest support from other States, as well as from regional and international organizations, to combat violent extremism and terrorism."⁷ In our last report on Mozambique, we expressed concern over the growing presence of Islamic extremists attacking and killing Christians.

Legal Framework

4. Article 3 of Mozambique's Constitution provides that Mozambique is "a State governed by the rule of law, based on pluralism of expression and democratic political organisation and on the respect for and guarantee of fundamental human rights and freedoms."⁸

¹ Jeanne Marie Penvenne, *Mozambique*, BRITANNICA, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Mozambique> (Oct. 1, 2025).

² *Religion Indexes (Mozambique)*, THE ASS'N OF RELIGION DATA ARCHIVES, <https://www.thearda.com/world-religion/national-profiles?u=156c> (last visited Oct. 1, 2025).

³ *Mozambique*, OPEN DOORS, <https://www.opendoors.org.za/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/mozambique/> (last visited Oct 1, 2025).

⁴ *Universal Periodic Review – Mozambique*, OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/mz-index>.

⁵ *Infographic – Mozambique*, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/Infographics-MOZAMBIQUE.pdf>.

⁶ OHCHR, UPR of Mozambique (3rd Cycle – 38th Session) Thematic List of Recommendations, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/UPR38_Mozambique_Thematic_List_of_Recommendations.docx.

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ CONSTITUTION OF MOZAMBIQUE 2004 art. 3, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Mozambique_2007.

5. Further, Article 54 establishes protections for religious freedom:

1. All citizens shall have the freedom to practice or not to practice a religion.
2. Nobody shall be discriminated against, persecuted, prejudiced, deprived of his or her rights, or benefit from or be exempt from duties, on the grounds of his faith or religious persuasion or practice.
3. Religious denominations shall have the right to pursue their religious aims freely and to own and acquire assets for realising their objectives.
4. The protection of places of worship shall be ensured.⁹

6. Mozambique is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).¹⁰ Under article 18 of the ICCPR:

Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.

No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.¹¹

Religious Persecution

7. Since 2017, the Islamic State in Mozambique (ISIS-M) has been waging an insurgency in Mozambique, particularly in Cabo Delgado.¹² This insurgency has led to the slaughtering of at least three thousand people and has displaced approximately one million.¹³ One missionary, who is working to minister in Cabo Delgado, stated that “[m]any of our churches have been burned down. Our pastors have been killed, and their families have been killed.”¹⁴ Christian women and girls have been targeted by these Islamic extremists and are taken as “war trophies.”¹⁵ There have also been reports that Christian women and girls are kidnapped, sexually exploited, and forced into marriage.¹⁶ One fifteen-year-old boy, who now resides in a refugee camp, shared the horrors he witnessed: “Every time I close my eyes, I see the rapes of my mother and sisters. My father is dead. I just pray for the ability to have a sweet dream. Lord,

⁹ *Id.* art. 54.

¹⁰ *Ratification Status for Mozambique*, OHCHR,

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=118&Lang=EN.

¹¹ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights art. 18, *adopted* Dec. 16, 1966, 999 U.N.T.S. 171, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>.

¹² *Nine Christians Killed by Islamic State in Northern Mozambique*, BARNABAS AID (July 29, 2025), <https://www.barnabasaid.org/us/news/nine-christians-killed-by-islamic-state-in-northern-mozambique/>.

¹³ *Country: Mozambique*, GLOBAL CHRISTIAN RELIEF, <https://globalchristianrelief.org/christian-persecution/countries/mozambique/>.

¹⁴ Talia Wise, “Pray”: ISIS Terrorists Murder Christians in Mozambique – Churches Burned, Pastors Killed, CBN (Nov. 27, 2024), <https://cbn.com/news/world/pray-isis-terrorists-murder-christians-mozambique-churches-burned-pastors-killed>.

¹⁵ *Mozambique Media Advocacy Dossier ODI*, OPEN DOORS (2025),

https://www.opendoors.org/persecution/reports/Mozambique-Media_Advocacy_Dossier-ODI-2025.pdf.

¹⁶ *Id.*

please send me a good dream.”¹⁷ Christian boys have also been targeted by Islamic militants and have been forced to join their militia.¹⁸

8. The objectives of ISIS-M reflect the same goals of other ISIS affiliates.¹⁹ ISIS-M is focused on capturing territory, declaring war on Christianity,²⁰ and establishing an Islamic caliphate in northern Mozambique.²¹ Since Mozambique’s last review, there has been an increase in the frequency of attacks, as ISIS-M membership has grown to several thousand.²² While the majority of attacks have been centered around Cabo Delgado, recently ISIS-M has been moving to carry out attacks in neighboring provinces.²³

9. To help combat the ISIS-M insurgency in Mozambique, a coalition of forces was assembled. This coalition included Rwandan, Mozambican, and South African Development Community (SADC) troops. Unfortunately, they have been struggling to combat the recent surge of attacks by ISIS-M.²⁴ Further, in 2024, the SADC began removing troops from Mozambique.²⁵ The removal of troops reinvigorated ISIS-M, who wasted no time taking advantage of the reduction of security forces.²⁶ In 2024, ISIS-M launched a new campaign under the mantra “kill them where you find them”²⁷ and, in just the first few months of 2024, ISIS-M carried out fifty-seven attacks.²⁸ This was more than the total number of attacks carried out in all of 2023.²⁹ These attacks by ISIS-M militants involved looting, burning down homes, kidnappings, and targeted killings.³⁰ In some cases, militants demand payment or the individuals risk being killed or kidnapped.³¹

10. Below, we have highlighted just a small number of the attacks that have been carried out recently against Christians in Mozambique.

11. On August 3, 2025, militants attacked a village in Naphela and captured nine Christians, including children.³²

¹⁷ *Country: Mozambique*, *supra* note 13.

¹⁸ *Mozambique*, OPEN DOORS UK, <https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/mozambique/>.

¹⁹ *IntelBrief: Islamic State Resurging in Mozambique*, THE SOUFAN CTR. (Mar. 21, 2024), <https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-2024-march-21/>.

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ Katie O’Malley, *What Does ISIS-Allegiant Group in Mozambique Want?*, MISSION NETWORK NEWS (Apr. 1, 2024), <https://www.mnnonline.org/news/what-does-isis-allegiant-group-in-mozambique-want/>.

²² *IntelBrief: Islamic State Resurging in Mozambique*, *supra* note 19.

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ Sarah Miller & Mark Wood, *Dangerous Territory: A Deepening Humanitarian Emergency in Mozambique*, REFUGEES INT’L (June 28, 2024), <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports-briefs/dangerous-territory-a-deepening-humanitarian-emergency-in-northern-mozambique/>.

²⁵ Tefesehet Hailu, *How Does the Withdrawal of SAMIM Affect AU’s Engagement in the Conflict in Northern Mozambique?*, AMANI AFR. (July 15, 2024), <https://amaniafrica-et.org/how-does-the-withdrawal-of-samim-affect-aus-engagement-in-the-conflict-in-northern-mozambique/>.

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ John Newton & Paulo Aido, *MOZAMBIQUE: “Christians Are Suffering Greatly” Amid Spike in Attacks, Says Priest*, AID TO THE CHURCH IN NEED (May 7, 2025), <https://acnuk.org/news/2025/05/07/mozambique-christians-are-suffering-greatly-amid-spike-attacks-says-priest>.

³¹ *Id.*

³² Tim, *Christians Amongst 35 Killed in String of Attacks in Mozambique*, OPEN DOORS UK (Aug. 17, 2025), <https://www.opendoorsuk.org/news/latest-news/mozambique-christians-killed/>.

12. On August 1, 2025, militants killed fifteen Christians as they were attempting to flee during an attack.³³
13. On July 30, 2025, militants attacked Muanquina village, set fire to two churches, and burned down forty-three homes belonging to Christians.³⁴ Additionally, it is believed that a pastor was kidnapped and his whereabouts are unknown.³⁵
14. On July 28, 2025, militants killed eighteen people and destroyed several homes.³⁶
15. On July 24, 2025, ISIS-M militants killed three Christians in Chiure district.³⁷
16. On July 22, 2025, ISIS-M militants beheaded six Christians in the village of Natocua, Ancuabe district.³⁸
17. On April 19, 2025, ISIS-M militants burned down a Christian tourist site in Niassa province and killed six Mozambican soldiers.³⁹
18. Over the first two weeks in January 2025, ISIS-M militants killed ten Christians and burned down more than 200 homes.⁴⁰
19. In December 2024, ISIS-M militants kidnapped, and later killed, three Christians in a village in Muidumbe District, in Cabo Delgado province.⁴¹
20. On December 12, 2024, ISIS-M militants gunned down two Christians with machine guns in the village of Miangaliwa in Cabo Delgado province.⁴²
21. On November 27, 2024, ISIS-M militants burned down churches and homes in Chiúre District of Cabo Delgado.⁴³ Thankfully, no one was killed in the attack.⁴⁴
22. In November 2024, ISIS-M militants attacked a Christian village in the Ancuabe District of Cabo Delgado and killed six Christians.⁴⁵

³³ *Id.*

³⁴ *Id.*

³⁵ *Id.*

³⁶ *Id.*

³⁷ *Nine Christians Killed by Islamic State in Northern Mozambique*, BARNABAS AID (July 29, 2025), <https://www.barnabasaid.org/us/news/nine-christians-killed-by-islamic-state-in-northern-mozambique/>.

³⁸ *Id.*

³⁹ *ISIS Claims its Fighters Seized Helicopter in Deadly Attack on Christian Tourist Site in Mozambique's Niassa Region*, MEMRI (May 1, 2025), <https://www.memri.org/jttm/isis-claims-its-fighters-seized-helicopter-deadly-attack-christian-tourist-site-mozambiques>.

⁴⁰ *Wise*, *supra* note 14.

⁴¹ *In Two-Week Span, Islamic State (ISIS) African Affiliates Kill at Least 42 Christians, Burn Over 70 Homes in 12 Attacks on Villages in Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mozambique*, MEMRI (Dec. 16, 2024), <https://www.memri.org/jttm/two-week-span-islamic-state-isis-african-affiliates-kill-least-42-christians-burn-over-70-homes>.

⁴² *Id.*

⁴³ *Mozambique: At Least Ten More Christians Killed*, ARCHONS OF THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE (Dec. 6, 2024), <https://archons.org/persecution/mozambique-at-least-ten/>.

⁴⁴ *Id.*

⁴⁵ *Id.*

23. On November 7, 2024, a Christian was killed by ISIS-M machine gun fire and another was captured.⁴⁶ The captured Christian was killed two days later.⁴⁷

24. On November 3, 2024, ISIS-M militants captured two Christians and slit their throats.⁴⁸

25. On February 12, 2024, ISIS-M militants opened fire on a bus in Cabo Delgado.⁴⁹ The attack resulted in the death of the driver.⁵⁰ The militants left a note that read:

We declare war on all Christian in the world for three things either to be a Muslim or paying (Jizya). If you haven't pay (Jizya) it's a war until final earth (Qiyama). To Muslims we announce peace to all the world let's work together to defend the religion of (Allah) together. If you refuse then you will pay (Jizya) and if you refuse to pay (Jizya) you will be killed.⁵¹

26. Between January 4 and February 12, 2024, ISIS-M militants killed twenty-two Christians, burned down 237 homes, and destroyed five churches.⁵²

27. Unfortunately, the tragic stories highlighted above are just a fraction of the atrocities that are being committed against Christians in Mozambique. Between 2017 and 2024, it has been estimated that as many as 3,000 Christians have been killed in Mozambique.⁵³

Recommendations

28. As demonstrated by the stories illustrated above, Christians in Mozambique are living in constant fear of getting kidnapped, killed, or their homes destroyed. Mozambique must take immediate and meaningful steps to stop the violence that is being committed against Christians because of their faith. Further, we ask that Mozambique provide aid and support to those who have been displaced and work to ensure their safe return to their homes.

⁴⁶ Wise, *supra* note 14.

⁴⁷ *Id.*

⁴⁸ *Id.*

⁴⁹ Linda Burkle, *War on Christians in Mozambique*, INT'L CHRISTIAN CONCERN (Mar. 7, 2024), <https://www.persecution.org/2024/03/07/war-on-christians-in-mozambique/>.

⁵⁰ *Id.*

⁵¹ *Id.*

⁵² *Id.*

⁵³ *Id.*