

Humanitarian Crisis in Cabo Delgado: The Need for Relief and the Quest for Peacemaking

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The crisis in the Cabo Delgado region of northern Mozambique has created a humanitarian crisis leaving 1.3 million war victims with the urgent need of relief support.

In particular, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), has issued an appeal for US \$413 million in emergency aid to support the affected and displaced Mozambicans in the troubled region. A portion of this amount, approximately US \$26 million is required to address the effects of the natural disasters that have afflicted the province.

On 19th April 2024, the OCHA representative to Mozambique, Paola Serrao Emerson, stated that her organization is under-funded and unable to adequately address the devastating humanitarian situation in the southern African nation. According to the UN official, 2.3 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in the northern provinces of Cabo Delgado and Nampula, but OCHA is operating with insufficient resources.

Emerson noted that OCHA had only received approximately US \$43 million, or 11 percent of the appeal, whereas typically the organization would typically have more than 20 percent of the required funds at this time of the year. According to Emerson, food insecurity further compounds the vulnerability of the internally displaced people, host communities and returnees alike. This highlights the urgency of peacemaking processes that will de-escalate the crisis and enable communities to stabilize themselves in the short to medium-term.

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In addition to the man-made conflict, Mozambique is regularly exposed to cyclones, floods, and droughts, damaging private and public infrastructure. In 2023, tropical cyclone Freddy, a record-breaking storm, hit Mozambique's northern region twice, causing destructive winds, extreme rainfall, and widespread flooding, which affected a significant proportion of the population of 33 million people. Specifically, one million people were affected, with the vast majority forced to flee their homes.

Humanitarian organizations, the UN, national and international organizations provide a vital service in terms of supporting people with food assistance, with health support, with child support assistance, and, with mental health psychiatric support, amongst many others throughout Cabo Delgado.

The humanitarian crisis is occurring in a context in which terrorist attacks have increased in Mozambique. Last month, missionaries, priests and nuns were forced to flee from remote towns and villages to Pemba and other large cities, which are overwhelmed with displaced people as the insurgency intensified. Concurrently, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM), has begun to draw down its presence due to financial difficulties. The Mozambican Defense Minister, Cristovao Chume told state run Radio Mozambique that the end of the SADC Mozambique Mission does not represent the end of the cooperation between the government and SADC, given the fact that there are ongoing challenges to preventing and combating terrorism and violent extremism, which in Mozambique is widespread in the province of Cabo Delgado.

Since 2017, the insurgency in the northeastern province of Cabo Delgado is waged by a group calling itself Islamic State that continues to terrorize civilians. The humanitarian crisis requires urgent attention in terms of relief and support. However, it needs to be buttressed by the implementation of strategies that can foster and enhance peacemaking, peacebuilding and transitional justice in the region which is ultimately the only guarantor for a more stabilized region which will enable the people to improve their livelihoods.

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