

WAN-IFRA Board Press Freedom Resolution – Mozambique, 2019

The Board of the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA), meeting in Glasgow, Scotland on 3rd June, 2019 during the 71st World News Media Congress, 26th World Editors Forum, and 3rd Women in News Summit, calls for renewed global solidarity with the Mozambican press in the wake of arbitrary arrests and continuing attacks on independent media in Mozambique.

The Board of WAN-IFRA denounces the systematic campaign by Mozambican authorities to muzzle the press by limiting the ability of local and foreign journalists to report on the insurgency in the coastal province of Cabo Delgado. The Board notes the military's arbitrary [detention](#) in late 2018 of investigative journalist Estacio Valoi and eNCA reporter Pindi Dube, including the confiscation of their equipment. Mozambican authorities must reverse these actions, which have made Cabo Delgado a no-go area for the press and compromised the right of the Mozambican people to receive information from diverse and credible news sources.

The Board acknowledges that in March 2019 two police officers were sentenced by a court in Pemba to five months imprisonment and the fine of 50000 meticals for beating and detaining Valoi during a separate incident in April 2017. It urges authorities to ensure that other attacks against journalists are similarly investigated and that those responsible are held accountable, including for the March 2018 [abduction](#) and torture of human rights lawyer and journalist Ericino de Salema, as well as the May 2016 attack on television commentator and academic Jaime Macuane, who was de Salema's predecessor on the popular current affairs television show "Pontos de Vista".

The Board was outraged by the January 5, 2019, [arrest](#) in Macomia of Amade Abubacar, a local community broadcast journalist and correspondent for online publications *Zitamar News* and *Carta de Mozambique*, while he was interviewing internally displaced persons fleeing the attacks in Cabo Delgado. Abubacar was detained without trial for over three months before he was finally released on bail following international outcry. Abubacar has since been charged with incitement by electronic means and spreading messages damaging to the Mozambican Armed Forces. The Board joins the [call](#) by organizations, including the Committee to Protect Journalists, the Mozambican chapter of the Media Institute of Southern Africa, and Amnesty International, for these baseless charges to be dropped and for Abubacar to be free to report without fear of reprisal.

The Board acknowledges with regret the prohibitively [high](#) financial costs that unduly target independent media, including hikes in registration, license renewal, and accreditation fees, that were due to take effect on August 23 last year, have since been held in abeyance following a massive outcry from local and international press groups. The Board urges that these crippling fees that would have undermined transparency ahead of this year's national election be formally nullified in the interests of developing a diverse and pluralistic media and ensuring promotion of the public's right to know. It notes that these charges further foster self-censorship and contravene Mozambique's constitutionally enshrined right to a free press.

The Board of WAN-IFRA reminds Mozambique of its obligations as a signatory to international conventions regarding freedom of expression. With a national election scheduled for later this year in the country, the Board urges the government of Mozambique, as well as ruling and opposition politicians, to publicly commit not to harass, attack or intimidate journalists and to ensure an environment that is conducive to a free and fair election.