

Dialogue initiatives for peacebuilding in Cabo Delgado

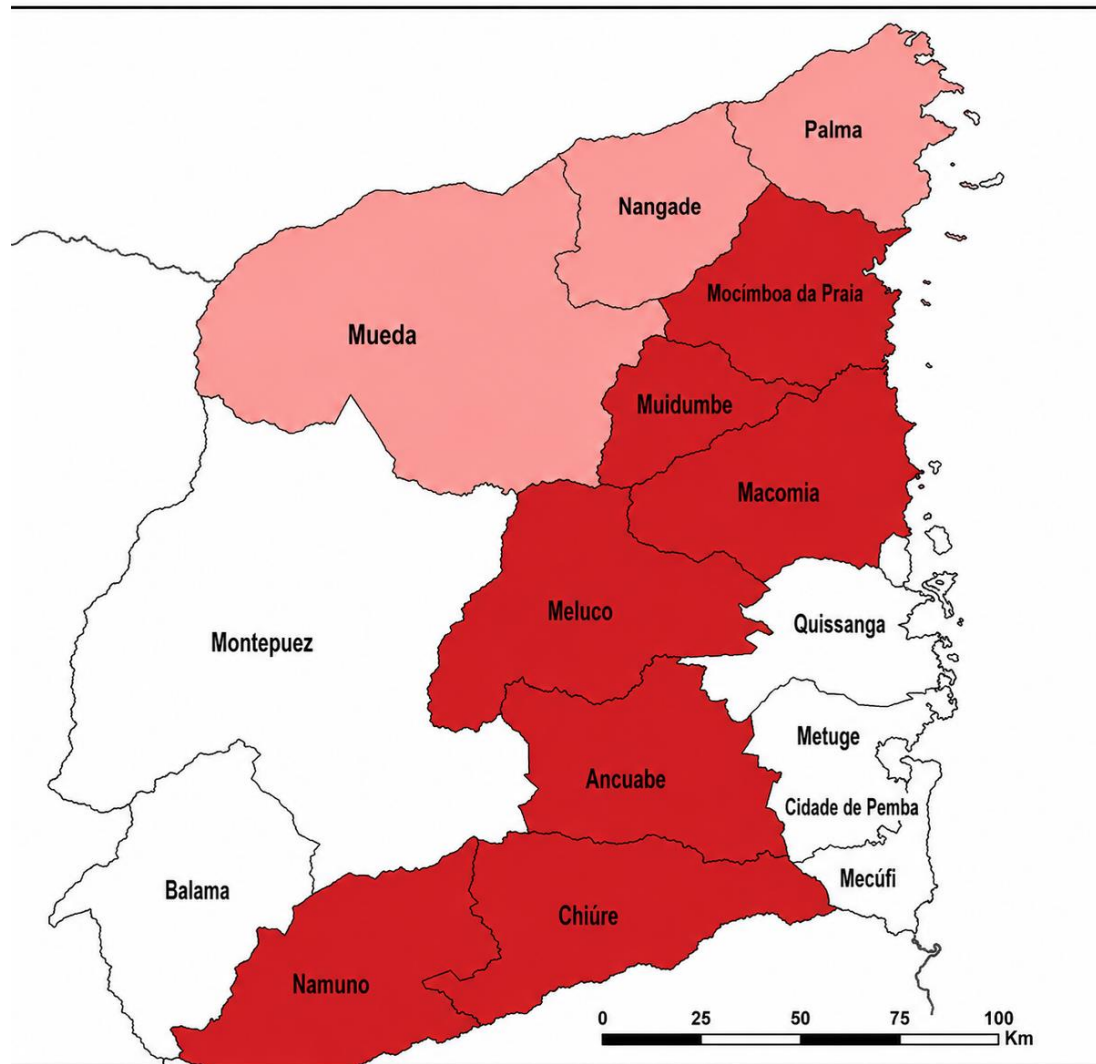
Maputo, 27 July 26

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- The Cabo Delgado insurgency has continued despite years of extensive military operations.
- Mozambican and foreign forces have reduced the insurgents' operational capacity but have not ended the conflict.
- A military response alone cannot address the local grievances sustaining recruitment and community support.
- Dialogue should become a central component of a broader political, social, economic and security strategy.

Insurgents' attacks continue

Operations in 10 of 17 districts: **freedom of movement**



Attacks in transport corridors

Attacks on passenger transport and private vehicles: extortion



Dialogue can operate at two interconnected levels:

- Horizontal dialogue: engagement among communities, religious groups, traditional leaders, young people, women and civil society.
- Vertical dialogue: communication between affected communities, state institutions and, where possible, insurgent leaders.

Dialogue does not necessarily legitimise the insurgents' ideology. It can:

- Identify grievances and conflict drivers.
- Rebuild trust and social cohesion.
- Reduce recruitment and community support for insurgents.
- Create conditions for mediation or formal negotiations.

Publications addressing Dialogue for Peacebuilding in Cabo Delgado



POLICY BRIEF

Inclusive dialogue: a priority for resolving the Cabo Delgado insurgency

Borges Nhamirre

The armed insurgency in Cabo Delgado entered its eighth year in October 2025. Despite extensive military efforts, jihadists remain active and pose a serious threat to military and human security. Now under new leadership, the Mozambican government continues to prioritise an exclusively militarised response even though this approach has consistently failed to contain violent extremism. Attempts to resolve the conflict through dialogue have had little impact as they lack government support.



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Policy Paper

IS IT POSSIBLE TO DIALOGUE AND NEGOTIATE WITH *AL-SHABAAB*?

Pathways to De-escalating Armed Violence and Building a Positive Peace in Northern Mozambique

| Salvador Forquilha, João Pereira & Emilio Zeca

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- Youth unemployment and political and economic exclusion.
- Poor conditions and limited assistance for displaced and returning populations.
- Police extortion and abuses by security forces.
- Religious discrimination and restrictions affecting Muslim communities.
- Ethnic divisions and mistrust, particularly in Mocímboa da Praia.
- Stigmatisation and inadequate reintegration of former insurgent associates.
- Loss of farmland and fishing grounds linked to LNG projects.
- Perceptions that outsiders are taking employment and business opportunities.

- Interreligious Centre for Peace (CIPAZ): brought Muslim and Christian leaders together and challenged extremist narratives.
- Interreligious Dialogue: promoted by MASC and IESE to support peace, reconciliation and interfaith cooperation.
- Peacemaking Advisory Group (PAG): conducted consultations with government, civil society, religious leaders and displaced communities.
- Intercultural Dialogue: led by Professor Severino Ngoenha to address religious, ethnic, regional, political and economic divisions.
- Dialogue Advisory Group (DAG): explored the feasibility of facilitating communication with armed actors.

Why the initiatives have achieved limited results

- The government has shown little interest in supporting dialogue.
- Mediators lack official authorisation to contact insurgents.
- Government discourse presents the insurgency as international terrorism with no identifiable local interlocutors.
- High-level religious representatives do not always enjoy the confidence of affected communities.
- Security conditions restrict access to conflict-affected districts.
- Initiatives operate independently and often duplicate one another's work.
- Competition for donor funding discourages coordination.
- Most initiatives have remained exploratory or ended when external funding stopped.

The insurgents are not entirely “faceless”

- The insurgency is affiliated with the Islamic State and uses terrorist tactics.
- However, most fighters and much of the leadership are Mozambican.
- Many originate from Mocímboa da Praia and are known within local communities.
- Treating the conflict solely as international terrorism obscures its local roots.
- Community and religious networks could help identify credible channels for communicating with local insurgent leaders.

What the government should do

- Recognise the limitations of an exclusively military response.
- Integrate dialogue into the national conflict-resolution strategy.
- Support existing community, interreligious and intercultural initiatives.
- Provide mediators with the political space and security required to operate.
- Facilitate dialogue among communities, religious leaders, state institutions and insurgents.
- Address unemployment, displacement, exclusion, discrimination and security-force abuses.
- Work with credible regional and international mediators to establish communication channels.

What dialogue organisations should do

- Coordinate their activities and share information.
- Build on existing community initiatives rather than duplicating them.
- Ensure meaningful participation by local leaders, young people, women and marginalised groups.
- Strengthen the capacity of local mediators and community representatives.
- Develop clear and responsible strategies for engaging violent extremist groups.
- Establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.
- Present local grievances to the government in a coherent and coordinated manner.