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President Nyusi urges terrorists to surrender

President Filipe Nyusi on 4 October urged the ISIS-linked terrorists operating in parts of the northern province of Cabo Delgado to turn themselves over to the authorities. Speaking to reporters in Maputo, immediately after laying a wreath at the Monument to the Mozambican Heroes, to mark the 29th anniversary of the 1992 peace agreement between the government and the Renamo rebels, President Nyusi stressed that the terrorists “have nowhere to go”.

The terrorists are being relentlessly pursued by the Mozambican defence and security force and their allies from Rwanda and the Standby Force of SADC (Southern African Development Community), and have been driven out of their main bases (Siri-1 and Siri-2).

The President added, “we are sure that leaders of these groups are on the run and may even have left the country”.

President Nyusi stressed that it was not the government’s intention to take reprisals. Whether they had voluntarily joined the ranks of the terrorists or had been pressganged, they were now disoriented, just running from one place to the next. “We want to urge them not to wait alone to be pursued until they are killed”, said the President, “that is not the intention of the defence and security forces. They should surrender, in an orderly fashion”.

President Nyusi also urged Mariano Nhongo, the leader of the self-styled Renamo Military Junta, to surrender and join the current demobilisation of the Renamo militia.

The Junta broke away from Renamo in mid-2019, and Nhongo has repeatedly denounced Renamo leader Ossufo Momade as “a traitor”. His forces staged repeated ambushes on the main roads of the central provinces of Manica and Sofala throughout 2020, but since January only one attack has been attributed to the Junta.

Many Junta members, including some of Nhongo’s close aides, have surrendered. President Nyusi revealed that in late September, the defence forces came close to capturing Nhongo, near the town of Inhaminga, in Sofala. In making his escape, Nhongo had left his jacket behind, said the President. “It can’t go on like this”, he said. “He must surrender. He should not wait for something strange to happen with him”.

President Nyusi promised that, if he surrenders, Nhongo will not be harmed. He will be demobilised and then “he will organise his life and choose where he wants to stay”.

HRW denounces use of child soldiers

The international NGO, Human Rights Watch (HRW), on 29 September denounced the use of child soldiers by the Islamic State-linked terrorist group in the northern province of Cabo Delgado.

In a statement, HRW lamented that “the armed group, known locally as Al-Shabab, has abducted hundreds of boys, some as young as 12, trained them in bases across Cabo Delgado province, and forced them to fight alongside adults against government forces”.

It added that “in the town of Palma, parents said that they watched their sons wield guns when they returned with other fighters to raid their village”.

HRW pointed out that there is an international prohibition on the use of child soldiers. Its Africa director, Mausi Segun, stressed that “using children in fighting is cruel, unlawful, and should never take place”.

HRW gathered evidence for its claims by speaking over the phone with four parents of kidnapped boys, a former child soldier, and two witnesses to abuses. The child soldier and witnesses had escaped from the Al-Shabaab training base in the administrative post of Mbau, in Mocimboa da Praia district, where they were held captive for several weeks. HRW noted that “their accounts are consistent with media reports that the armed group was kidnapping boys to be fighters”.

According to witnesses interviewed by HRW, hundreds of boys were being forced into the insurgency. One witness stated that “they behave like adult men, even picking ‘wives’ among the kidnapped girls”.

Mbau was recently liberated from the terrorists in a joint operation between Mozambican and Rwandan forces and life is slowly returning to normal in areas that have previously been attacked by the terrorists.

This is a condensed version of the AIM daily news service - for details contact pfauvet@live.com

SADC forces kill terrorist leader

The SADC (Southern African Development Community) Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) on 2 October announced that it has killed a leader of the ISIS terrorists operating in Cabo Delgado province.

The man, named as Rajab Awadhi Ndanjili, was killed when SAMIM overran a terrorist base at Chitama, in Nangade district, which borders on Tanzania. SAMIM announced the capture of the Chitama base on 26 September and has now confirmed that one of the 18 terrorists killed in the clash was Ndanjili, also known as Sheikh Njili North. Ndanjili, a native of the Nangade village of Litinginya, “was a leader of the religious sect of Al Sunnah wa Jama’ah”, said the SAMIM statement. This is one of the names used by the terrorist group.

SAMIM says Ndanjili was regarded as a “determinant in the recruitment and indoctrination of members of the group”. He is believed to have been one of those who orchestrated the first terrorist raid, against police installations in Mocimboa da Praia, on 5 October 2017.

Food crisis in Cabo Delgado to continue beyond June 2022

The US-funded Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) has warned that it expects an area level food crisis to continue across the northern province of Cabo Delgado for more than nine months.

The food crisis was caused by hundreds of thousands of people fleeing terrorist attacks. A recent offensive by Mozambican security forces and their allies from SADC (Southern African Development Community) and Rwanda, has secured areas contested by the terrorists. However, agriculture and livelihoods have been destroyed and support is needed until the next harvest.

In a report published on 30 September, FEWS NET acknowledges that some internally displaced people have begun returning home. However, it expects emergency food assistance will be needed for more than 866,000 people beyond June 2022. It points out that the World Food Programme (WFP) does not have the funding to provide the food aid needed, and laments that WFP will continue to provide only half rations throughout October. This gives recipients only 39 per cent of the calories they need. FEWS NET notes that in response to the crisis, WFP is planning to carry out a vulnerability-based targeting exercise covering internally displaced people and host communities to better target food assistance.

According to WFP, US\$67.9 million are needed to sustain its operations in northern Mozambique until December 2021. However, it is not the only international organisation in urgent need of funds to help the victims of terrorism. Earlier this week, the United Nations Children’s Fund, UNICEF, revealed that it has only received US\$25 million in donations to provide life-saving and life-sustaining services for children and their caregivers in Mozambique. When taking into account funds carried over from previous years UNICEF’s funding gap stands at 60 per cent.

Reconstruction to cost US\$300 million

The Reconstruction Plan for the northern province of Cabo Delgado (PRCD), designed to rebuild the social and economic infrastructure destroyed by terrorists, is expected to cost US\$300 million.

The amount was disclosed on 27 September in Maputo by Prime Minister Carlos Agostinho do Rosario, during a meeting between the government and its cooperation partners to discuss the PRCD.

Rosario said that, out of the total amount of the plan, US\$200 million will be spent on short term actions within a year to ensure an immediate impact. The remaining amount will be spent on medium and long term actions.

“We recognise that infrastructure reconstruction, and particularly repairing the social fabric, is a great challenge. The government needs to establish partnerships and synergies at several levels to ensure that the work can be conducted as swiftly as desired,” Rosario stressed.

The defence and security forces, working alongside Rwandan forces and the Southern African Development Community Military Mission (Samim) have liberated the worst affected districts (including Mocimboa da Praia, Palma, Muidumbe, Nangade and Macomia) from ISIS terrorists.

The success of the joint forces on the ground, Rosario stated, has allowed a gradual return of people who fled from their homes and sought refuge elsewhere. The insurgency has affected 348 primary schools and eight secondary schools, 31 health centres, and has wrecked about 4,965 micro, small and medium-sized companies.

Rosario explained that through the short term actions envisaged in the plan, the government wants to reopen public administration, provide water and sanitation, resume health care and education and re-establish communications. In addition, the plan will create the basic conditions for agriculture and fisheries.

He stressed that “some of the envisaged actions are already underway, and we have resumed the payment of the basic social allowance and the delivery of humanitarian aid. We have restored electricity and we are restoring road access and mobile telecommunications”.

The long term aims of the plan include restoring security and people’s livelihoods in their places of origin and creating the necessary conditions for the private sector and the return of investors.

Irish Ambassador, Nuala O’Brien, on behalf of the cooperation partners, acknowledged the complexity of the challenges but pledged a commitment to creating a coordinated answer to the needs of the displaced communities.

The United Nations Resident Coordinator in Mozambique, Myrta Kaulard, said further discussions will be held to gain a better understanding of the details of the plan. However, she praised the progress on the ground which has enabled the delivery of humanitarian aid into areas that were previously completely out of reach.

Second dose of AstraZeneca now available

The Health Ministry has announced that people who have received the first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine against Covid-19 should, as from 5 October, go to the nearest vaccination post to receive their second and final dose. This should cover 72,277 people in Maputo city, and in Nampula, Tete, Manica, Gaza, and Maputo provinces.

This is the end of phase two of the national vaccination campaign, which will run from 5 to 19 October. The Ministry announced that the third phase of the national vaccination campaign will begin on 20 October, covering both urban and rural areas. The target is to vaccinate seven million people.

To date, over a million people have been vaccinated – which is more than ten per cent of the 17 million people the Ministry hopes to vaccinate.

The health authorities on 3 October reported only 14 new cases of the Covid-19 respiratory disease – the lowest figure since 29 May, when seven cases were reported. Five cases were reported from Maputo city, three from Nampula, three from Niassa, and one each from Cabo Delgado, Zambezia and Inhambane. There were no positive cases reported from any of the other five provinces. For the second consecutive day, no deaths from Covid-19 were reported. The Covid-19 death toll in Mozambique thus remains 1,918.

US donates 336,000 doses of Covid-19 vaccine

The United States government has donated a further 336,000 doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine against the Covid-19 respiratory disease.

Speaking at a ceremony on 24 September at Maputo International airport where the vaccines were delivered, the US ambassador, Dennis Hearne, declared that the US feels proud to be part of a coordinated global effort to bring vital support to Mozambicans.

According to Hearne, “our two governments have worked together in a variety of ways to curb COVID-19 in Mozambique. These vaccines will fill an important need to successfully fight the virus”.

This is the second batch of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine that the US government has donated to Mozambique. The first batch, of 302,400 doses, arrived in July. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine has the advantage that it is administered in a single dose whereas the other Covid-19 vaccines available require two doses. In addition, the vaccine can be stored at higher temperatures than some other vaccines.

The embassy added that the US assistance has already donated additional equipment to combat Covid-19 valued at S\$62.5 million, made up of 50 ventilators, personal protective equipment for health professionals, and laboratory and oxygen equipment,

The US has pledged US\$4 billion to the Covax initiative which is administered by the World Health Organisation (WHO). It has also promised to purchase a billion doses of vaccine for developing countries and has donated 80 million doses from its supplies.

WIH to invest \$800 million on industrial development

West International Holding (WIH), the Chinese majority shareholder in the “Dugongo” cement company operating in the Mozambican province of Maputo, has promised to disburse US\$800 million in a financial package to boost industrial development.

The Mozambican Ministry of Industry and Trade and the Chinese investor on 29 September in Maputo signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for four industrial development projects. They include another cement plant with an annual production capacity of 5,000 tonnes, a 100-megawatt thermal power station, a cement milling plant with a capacity of 900 tonnes, as well as a glassware production unit with an annual capacity of 600 tonnes.

The Minister of Industry and Trade, Carlos Mesquita, told reporters that the Chinese investors have assessed several areas across the country. The WIH mission had just returned from the central province of Tete but had also visited Nampula.

“They have a strong will to continue investing in Mozambique as a country with a great potential that offers conditions for further investments and partners they want to bring into the country’s industrial fabric,” he said, adding that WIH is attentive to the business environment.

WIH Chairperson, Zhang Jimin, said the construction and implementation of the Dugongo Cement plant, with a daily production of clinker estimated at 5,000 tonnes, was a great success and enjoyed the support of the Mozambican government and people.

He pointed out that Mozambique is a country worth investing in because of the good investment environment, the local market, and the availability of resources.

Authorities to expel illegal miners

Police in the central province of Manica have launched an offensive to halt the invasion of the foothills of the Vumba mountain range by artisanal gold miners.

Gold prospecting has been blamed for much of the pollution of the main rivers that cross Manica province. In particular, the Chicamba reservoir, Manica’s largest artificial lake and fishing centre, has recorded increasing cloudiness of its waters. The reservoir, built on the Messica River, receives waters from several tributaries which pour turbid water into the lake as a result of the illegal mining. According to a report by the television station STV, the pollution of the rivers takes place in the dead of the night and when authorities investigate there is no one to be found.

The Mayor of Manica town municipality, Patricio Chimisso, said that the municipal authorities are at war with the gold prospectors and a victory for the authorities is far from within reach. The gold rush in the region started in 2019 and the small-scale miners claim that they only resort to environmental crimes to protect their livelihoods.

Tchumene junction eases traffic around Maputo

The Tchumene junction, which links the EN4 motorway from South Africa to the Maputo Ring Road, was officially opened to traffic on 23 September. The junction which cost US\$16 million has five access ramps to ensure the free flow of traffic from the outer Maputo suburb of Zimpeto to Matola and Moamba on the EN4 motorway.

The junction will also allow traffic from South Africa to flow to northern Mozambique without passing through Maputo. In addition, a new 100-metre long bridge has been built over the Matola River.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, the Deputy Minister of Public Works, Cecilia Chamutota, said “it is with great pride and a feeling of mission accomplished that we deliver the infrastructure, with great accessibility, safety and comfort”.

The junction will divert away from Maputo a great deal of traffic travelling from South Africa, particularly during the festive season when many of the Mozambican workers return to their homes in Gaza and Inhambane provinces.

Chamutota added that “the connection is very important as it will reduce the time taken for motorists to reach their destinations and ensure that there is a lower number of road accidents”.

She pointed out that measures are being taken to improve road signs for better safety, and that public lighting using solar energy will shortly be installed along the road.

Regarding the four toll gates under construction along the Ring Road, the Deputy Minister said that the tariff has not yet been decided.

Inflation of 0.19 per cent in August

The average level of prices in Mozambique rose by 0.19 per cent in August, according to the latest figures from the National Statistics Institute (INE), based on the consumer price indices for the three largest cities (Maputo, Nampula and Beira).

This follows four months of deflation, in April, May, June and July, when prices fell by 0.03, 0.31, 0.52 and 0.24 per cent respectively.

Inflation in the first eight months of the year was 2.48 per cent, and annual inflation (1 September 2020 to 31 August 2021) was 5.61 per cent. Among the goods that contributed most significantly to inflation in August were lemons (up by 19.7 per cent), frozen fish (4.1 per cent), fresh fish (0.4 per cent), and wine (3.6 per cent).

This was offset by the declining prices of some foodstuffs, such as cabbage (down by 7.7 per cent), cassava flour (also 7.7 per cent), lettuce (2.8 per cent),

and live chickens (1.1 per cent).

Inflation varied between the three cities in August – it was 0.36 per cent in Nampula, 0.15 per cent in Maputo, and 0.02 per cent in Beira.

The price trends in 2021 are familiar from previous years. Inflation rises in the initial months, before turning into deflation in the middle of the year. Price rises then resume in the run-up to the Christmas and New Year holiday period.

Cardinal to be buried in Maputo Cathedral

Mozambique’s Cardinal, Alexandre Jose Maria dos Santos, who died on 29 September at the age of 103, will be laid to rest on 7 October in Maputo Cathedral.

According to a brief statement issued by the Maputo Archdiocese, his burial will be preceded by a Requiem Mass, with his body lying in state.

The farewell ceremony will be carried out in strict compliance with the health measures imposed to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Alexandre dos Santos was ordained into the priesthood in 1953 and became the first black Mozambican Catholic priest. The Portuguese had landed on the Mozambican coast in the late 15th century, when Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope, on his way to India. The Portuguese boasted of bringing Christianity to Mozambique – but it was 500 years before any black man was ordained a priest.

In 1975, dos Santos, who was a member of the Franciscan order, became Mozambique’s first black bishop, and between 1975 and 2003, he served as the Archbishop of Maputo. In 1988, Pope John Paul II appointed him to the College of Cardinals

Throughout his active years, the Cardinal was the most prominent Mozambican face of the Roman Catholic Church. He was instrumental in setting up the Sao Tomas University, based in Maputo, and also played a significant role in the negotiations that led to the signing of the General Peace Agreement in 1992 in Rome, ending the war of destabilisation that pitted the Renamo rebels against the Mozambican government.

President Filipe Nyusi said the country has lost one of her finest children who fought for independent humanity regardless of social status, race, or any other distinction.

“He demonstrated a highly patriotic feeling when he joined the peace process. He realised that brothers should never fight one another when their differences can be settled peacefully through dialogue,” Nyusi stressed.

Renamo leader, Ossufo Momade, said the cardinal was an outstanding clergyman who preached to build a fair society. “He fulfilled his mission with profound humanism”, he said.