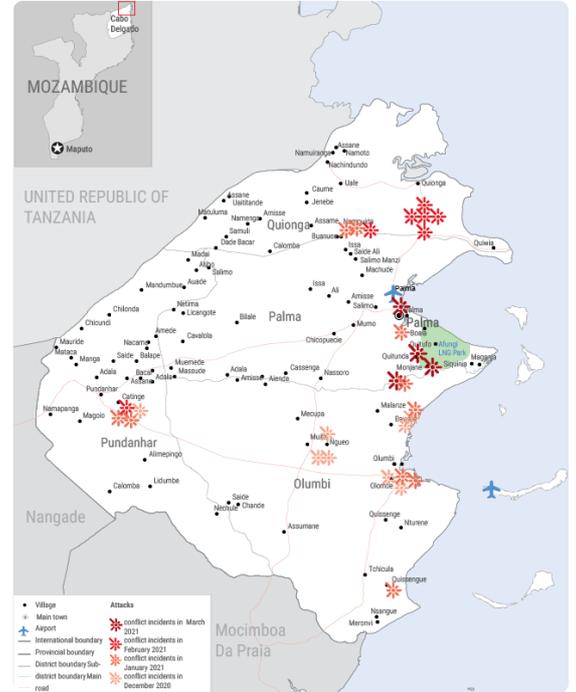


FLASH UPDATE (29 Mar 2021)

MOZAMBIQUE – ATTACKS IN PALMA DISTRICT Flash Update No.1

HIGHLIGHTS

- The humanitarian situation in Palma District, Cabo Delgado Province, Mozambique, is extremely concerning following the recent attack by non-state armed groups and ongoing clashes reported in the district since 24 March.
- Although the situation is difficult to verify due to communications outages, there are reports that dozens of civilians may have been killed during the attacks and clashes, while thousands of others are trying to flee the zone by foot, boat and road to reach safer destinations.
- More than 110,000 people live in Palma district, including more than 67,000 residents and 43,600 people who had sought shelter in Palma after being displaced from other parts of Cabo Delgado Province.
- Humanitarian partners have responded rapidly, with teams deployed to strategic points to receive people who are fleeing. The United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) is also supporting the evacuation of the most vulnerable from Palma.
- The escalation of violence in Palma comes at a moment when over 1.3 million people were already in need of urgent humanitarian assistance and protection in Cabo Delgado and the neighbouring provinces of Niassa and Nampula.
- Funding against the 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan—which covers Cabo Delgado, Niassa and Nampula—is extremely low and additional resources are urgently required to respond to the emerging needs.



SITUATION OVERVIEW

The humanitarian situation in Palma District of Cabo Delgado Province in northern Mozambique is extremely concerning following the recent attack by non-state armed groups targeting the District’s capital and ongoing clashes reported in the district since 24 March. Dozens of civilians have reportedly been killed and clashes between non-state armed groups and security forces are reportedly ongoing for the sixth day in a row, according to reports from a number of sources. Information on the situation is, however, extremely difficult to verify due to communications outages in Palma Town.

Since 24 March, thousands of people have reportedly fled to the bush around Palma Town, while several thousands have sought refuge near the Afunga natural gas site. There are also reports of people fleeing in other directions, including towards the Tanzanian border, southwards to the provincial capital, Pemba, via boat, and westwards through the bush towards Mueda and Montepuez districts. The International Organization for Migration’s (IOMs) displacement tracking teams have already received reports of more than 3,100 people displaced from Palma arriving into Nangade, Mueda, Montepuez and Pemba districts.

Prior to the attacks and clashes, Palma District was home to more than 110,000 people, including more than 67,000 residents and over 43,600 people who had sought shelter in Palma after being displaced from other parts of Cabo Delgado Province since the conflict began in October 2017. Humanitarians in Mozambique are therefore anticipating that thousands



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of people may be making their way by foot, boat and road to reach safer destinations. Many of the people fleeing—including children— have nothing but the clothes on their backs and have had to walk for days to reach safety. They will require urgent assistance at their destinations.

Prior to these events, people in Palma already faced a dire situation, with insecurity in the district since December 2020, coupled with the current lean season, leaving thousands of people in urgent need of additional assistance. Shortages of basic commodities were reported in the markets in January 2021, after attacks and insecurity cut off all main road routes into Palma *sede*.

The escalation of violence in Palma comes at a moment when over 1.3 million people -including nearly 670,000 internally displaced people- were already in need of urgent humanitarian assistance and protection in Cabo Delgado and the neighbouring provinces of Niassa and Nampula. Almost 580,000 people were uprooted from their homes in 2020 alone, as the number of attacks by non-state armed groups—including killings, beheadings and kidnappings—expanded geographically and increased in intensity.

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

Humanitarians are preparing to provide assistance and protection to support people impacted by the attacks and clashes, in coordination with the Government of Mozambique. Humanitarian experts—including health, protection and food security professionals—have deployed to strategic points to receive people fleeing the violence. Regular meetings are being organized to coordinate the response and a mapping of stocks and capacity is underway by humanitarian partners.

The United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS), operated by WFP, has supported the evacuation of the most vulnerable from Palma, while a civil society group, Voluntários Anónimos de Moçambique, is supporting the registration of missing people and providing information to their families. Some of the people evacuated were also supported with high energy biscuits. WFP is deploying 2,000 immediate response rations to support displaced population should they arrive in Pemba or in Ibo Island, as well as displaced population reaching Mueda. An additional 2,000 response rations kits are being pre-positioned to support displaced populations in the southern parts of Palma District.

Prior to the attack, Phumanitarians had carried out multiple deliveries of assistance to Palma since December 2020. WFP and food security partners delivered 258 metric tons of food assistance on 21 March to meet the needs of nearly 16,000 people for a month in Palma. In recent months, UNICEF and WASH partners delivered water, sanitation and hygiene supplies, including jerrycans, soap, certeza (water purifier), latrine slabs, tarpaulins and a bladder with capacity for 10,000 litres of water. WHO and health partners delivered supplies, including medicines for tuberculosis, nutritional supplies, gloves, syringes and cleaning materials, amongst others. UNFPA and partners working on sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence provided a 3-month supply of emergency reproductive health kits and 150 female dignity kits, while UNHCR and protection partners carried out protection monitoring.

HUMANITARIAN FUNDING

The humanitarian community in Mozambique was already stretched prior to the Palma attacks, having responded to multiple climate emergencies, on top of the conflict in Cabo Delgado, in the first months of 2021. Yet, the [humanitarian appeal](#) for the Cabo Delgado crisis is currently just [1 per cent funded](#). More resources are immediately required to meet the needs of people fleeing violence in Palma.

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