



# CABO LIGADO

21 March 2024

## Cabo Ligado Update: 4-17 March 2024

[Cabo Ligado](#) — or ‘connected cape’ — is a Mozambique conflict observatory launched by ACLED, Zitamar News, and MediaFax.

### BY THE NUMBERS

#### Cabo Delgado, October 2017-March 2024

- Total number of political violence events: 1,787
- Total number of reported fatalities from political violence: 4,959
- Total number of reported fatalities from political violence targeting civilians: 2,157

All ACLED data are available for download via the [data export tool](#) and [curated data files](#).

### SITUATION SUMMARY

The insurgency appears to have concluded its southward offensive, which ravaged Cabo Delgado province’s southern districts, especially Chiúre, from early February. However, in the last two weeks, insurgents have focused on systematically looting Quissanga town and the nearby Quirimba island, where they killed at least nine members of the security forces.

The Islamic State newspaper al-Naba claimed that after arriving on Quirimba on 3 March, insurgents clashed with the security forces, killing two of them, while two others drowned trying to flee. Another five were captured and later executed, according to al-Naba, which published a photo supposedly of four soldiers just before they were shot, with a fifth apparently already dead, lying mostly outside of the photo. Other sources vary in their account of the sequence of events and how many were killed, but they broadly corroborate al-Naba’s report.

Insurgents ransacked the island, stealing food and supplies. Some tried to reassure locals they were making a list of all the goods they had taken so they could pay for them later, but there are no reports that this has happened so far. Insurgents requisitioned boats and coerced civilians into helping them move the stolen supplies to Quissanga. Mozambican security forces fired on one such boat as it passed between Quissanga and Ibo island on 7 March. Insurgents returned fire with rockets and mortars from Quissanga and treated wounded civilians at the village of Tandanhague, local sources claimed.

Insurgents left Quirimba island that day. The governor of Cabo Delgado told reporters that the security forces had expelled the insurgents from Quirimba, but there is no evidence for this. The military has banned all fishing in the area, which many depend on for their livelihoods, and soldiers continue to broadly suspect locals of being insurgent sympathizers, local sources reported.

In Quissanga, insurgents stripped the town of goods, including food, building materials, medical supplies, and even an ambulance and tractor. These goods were taken to the pier at Tandanhague and loaded onto boats bound for Mucojo in Macomia district. The Mozambican navy did not intervene, and the boats were beyond the effective range of the army based on Ibo, a local source told Cabo Ligado.

Meanwhile, the insurgents operating in Chiúre returned north. On their way, they attacked the village of Pulo in Metuge district on 6 March, having previously beheaded a man there [on 28 January](#) during their march south. IS claimed to have killed six people and burned 29 homes. IS social media also shared photos of a school building being set alight along with five dead bodies, two of whom had been beheaded. [Lusa](#) reported that nine school children were abducted, but according to [Carta de Moçambique](#), they were locked in a room and were later freed by the Local Force.

In the aftermath of the insurgent attacks in Chiúre, which displaced around 100,000 people, local authorities in Nampula [reported](#) on 4 March that 72 children were missing. The Protection Working Group, which represents a collection of international aid agencies and NGOs, said that 30 families seeking refuge in Nampula province had asked police to locate their missing children, believing they either were abducted by insurgents or drowned in the Lúrio river while trying to flee.

In addition to insurgent violence, the Naparama local militia were accused of [killing](#) and mutilating the bodies of three officials working for STAE, Mozambique's election administration agency, in Katapua village in Chiúre on 8 March. Radio Moçambique reported that the Naparama confused the STAE workers for insurgents. The police announced that they will investigate the incident.

## FOCUS QUISSANGA OCCUPATION- THEN AND NOW

ISM entered Quissanga district headquarters on 2 March. According to a local source, the insurgents were still in the town on 16 March. This is not the first time the group has attacked and occupied Quissanga, which was first seized in March 2020. Their recent sojourn there indicates the significant threat they still present while showing they maintain support beyond the coastal strip of Macomia, where they are currently based.

Quissanga was one of a number of towns attacked by the insurgents between March and August 2020, attacks which demonstrated a real threat to the state. In March 2020, they occupied Quissanga and Mocímboa da Praia. The following month, they attacked Muidumbe district headquarters, Namacande. In May 2020, Macomia was attacked. This series of attacks culminated in them taking control of Mocimboa da Praia in August 2020.

Following the March 2020 attack, the insurgents effectively controlled the town for at least one month. They [demonstrated good relations](#) with residents, even challenging local youth to a football match. They encouraged fishermen to go to sea, and all to pray each day. They won the football match.

Four years on, they seem to have taken a similar approach, occupying the area without attacking civilians and managing to some extent to coexist peacefully alongside locals, though many fled when they realized insurgents were coming. A video clip and [photos](#) taken by a resident during this time show insurgents armed but at ease with residents. In one picture, one relaxes on a veranda with his PKM-type machine gun. A video clip of another armed man shows him packing a bag, as children skip by, a woman passes, and young men look on.

One difference compared to 2020 was ISM's ability to move a considerable amount of cargo out of Quissanga by boat. These included an ambulance, metal roofing sheets, food, and bedding, according to local sources. Despite Defense Armed Forces of Mozambique (FADM) patrols to the north and south of the

channel between Quissanga and Quirimba island, no counter-insurgency operations were undertaken in Quissanga itself, and the insurgents managed to get the goods out of Quissanga and north to Mucojo in Macomia district. Indeed, on 6 March, they targeted a FADM vessel with mortar fire and rocket-propelled grenades and were, according to local reports, able to rescue the crew of a vessel that had been hit by FADM fire from Ibo island.

In March 2020, the insurgents [numbered up to 2,500](#). Four years later, the ranks of ISM are thought to have shrunk considerably. However, they still maintain a sizeable force in Quissanga, likely in the low hundreds judging by local sources' reports. Their ability to enter Quissanga by land, occupy the town for nearly two weeks, and extract valuable supplies by sea indicates their continued strength and the weakness of FADM.

## ROUND-UP

### *Government names new insurgent leaders*

The Mozambican interior minister Pascoal Ronda [announced](#) the main insurgent leaders are named Óscar, Dardai, Zubair, Mane, Sheik, Amisse, and Machude. They replaced Ibn Omar, Abu Kital, Ali Mahando, and Amurane Adamo, who were killed by security forces in 2023, Ronda claimed. No further details were provided, and this information has not been independently corroborated.

### *IS issue new photo report for Mozambique*

The latest [photo report](#) from IS for Mozambique purports to depict their daily life. Titled "Diaries of soldiers of the caliphate soldiers in Mozambique," the 25 pages published on 10 March show groups of men praying, studying Q'uran, eating, and moving through villages. In one, a group watches a video clip of an execution. No women or children are depicted. Over February and March, IS released over 100 images from Mozambique in four weeks, indicating its importance. Whether this is backed up by technical and financial assistance remains to be seen.

### *Boat carrying humanitarian aid to Ibo sinks*

A boat carrying humanitarian supplies from Pemba to Ibo island sank on 16 March before it could reach its destination, local sources told Cabo Ligado. It is not clear yet what caused the sinking but the boat is not believed to have been attacked. There were no reported fatalities.

### *World Food Programme plans further drastic cuts in aid*

The World Food Programme (WFP) [reduced](#) the number of people it assisted in northern Mozambique from one million between January 2023 and January 2024 and will reduce food rations to just 215,000 by May this year, the WFP's Mozambique director Antonella d'Aprile told reporters on 15 March. D'Aprile also said the food crisis has been exacerbated by the tropical storm Filipo, which made landfall on 12 March and has affected 48,000 people, damaging or destroying more than 10,000 homes.

