

MOZAMBIQUE

Attacks on education continued in Mozambique in 2022 and 2023, although fewer attacks were identified than during the previous reporting period. Attacks on schools continued, and GCPEA identified incidents of their use for military purposes.

CONTEXT

Although the security situation in northern Mozambique improved during the reporting period, armed conflict continued in Cabo Delgado province between armed groups, state forces, and local militias,¹ and fighting spread to Nampula province.² In 2023, Mozambique legalized local militias to fight armed groups in Cabo Delgado province, according to Human Rights Watch and news reports.³

A non-state armed group reportedly affiliated with Islamic State (IS) and known locally as “Al-Shabab” or Al-Sunna wa Jama’a (ASWJ), continued to conduct attacks in Cabo Delgado province during the reporting period.⁴ In December 2023, after a months-long decline in violence, attacks increased, and 19 soldiers were killed in attacks by the group.⁵ Violence carried out by armed groups displaced approximately 946,000 people in northern Mozambique in 2022.⁶ As the security situation improved in 2023, over 570,000 people displaced by the conflict since 2017 had returned home.⁷ However, more than 109,000 people were newly displaced in 2023 due to ongoing violence.⁸

The humanitarian situation deteriorated in Mozambique during the reporting period as a result of violence, insecurity, and climate shocks.⁹ At the end of 2023, the UN reported that 2.3 million people needed humanitarian assistance in the country’s northern provinces, including 1.3 million children.¹⁰ Between January and March 2023, a tropical cyclone and floods impacted eight provinces in Mozambique, displacing over 184,000 people and damaging more than 132,000 houses and over 1,000 schools, according to the UN.¹¹

In 2023, an estimated three million children remained outside the education system.¹² In June 2022, renewed violence forced around 30,000 children to flee Cabo Delgado province, and 11 schools closed, impacting more than 5,740 students, according to Save the Children.¹³ According to the UN, armed groups recruited and used 132 children in 2022.¹⁴

ATTACKS ON SCHOOLS

GCPEA identified at least six attacks on schools during the 2022-2023 reporting period, most of which damaged or destroyed the school. This marks a decrease in attacks compared to previous years; the UN reported that over 220 schools were attacked between 2017 and 2021.¹⁵ Across reporting periods, non-state armed groups carried out the majority of attacks, which included arson, gunfire, and the use of explosive weapons.

GCPEA identified six attacks on schools in 2022.¹⁶ Separately, the UN verified two attacks on schools by non-state armed groups.¹⁷ Since it was not clear whether any of these overlapped with the incidents GCPEA collected, the UN number was not included in the count of attacks on schools in the report, to avoid double counting. Examples of attacks collected by GCPEA included:

- On January 27, 2022, in Nangororo village, Meluco district, Cabo Delgado province, an airstrike allegedly destroyed classrooms at a school, as reported by ACLED and local media outlet *Zitamar*.¹⁸
- On September 6, 2022, members of a non-state armed group allegedly set fire to a primary school and a secondary school in Chipene village, Memba district, Nampula province, disrupting education for at least 78 students, as reported by Human Rights Watch, ACLED, and media outlets.¹⁹ IS-linked group “Al-Shabab” claimed responsibility for the attack.²⁰
- On October 29, 2022, members of a non-state armed group reportedly burned a school in Murrameia village, Namuno district, Cabo Delgado province, as reported by ACLED and international media outlet *Deutsche Welle*.²¹

GCPEA did not identify any attacks on schools in 2023.

MILITARY USE OF SCHOOLS OR UNIVERSITIES

GCPEA identified at least 12 cases of the military use of schools during the 2022-2023 reporting period, an increase as compared to the previous reporting period when GCPEA did not identify any such incidents.²² In 2022, the UN verified the use of 12 schools; most of the incidents were perpetrated by the Mozambican military, although one school was used by the Southern African Development Community Mission in Mozambique.²³ Four schools were used for over a year by these forces.²⁴

In 2023, GCPEA received reports of the continued military use of previously occupied schools.²⁵ At least one school was vacated that year.²⁶

ENDNOTES

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- 12 UNESCO, “Spotlight on basic education completion and foundational learning: Mozambique,” 2023, p. 6.
- 13 “Children Flee Renewed Violence in Mozambique,” Save the Children press release, July 1, 2022.
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