

## Joint NGO statement

# International NGOs call for immediate official investigation into reports of series of atrocities committed by Mozambican security forces near TotalEnergies' Mozambique LNG premises

*[For immediate release]*

26 September 2024. Statement by: Justiça Ambiental / Friends of the Earth Mozambique; Les Amis de la Terre France / Friends of the Earth France; Milieudefensie / Friends of the Earth Netherlands; Friends of the Earth Europe; Friends of the Earth Japan; ReCommon; Reclaim Finance.

On September 26, 2024, Politico published an article by independent journalist Alex Perry [1] which reveals information about an alleged massacre of civilians, reported to have been committed near TotalEnergies' premises in mid 2021 by Mozambican public security forces.

Anabela Lemos, Director of Justiça Ambiental / Friends of the Earth Mozambique, says: *"This information cannot be ignored by the financial institutions supporting the French fossil fuel giant's activities in Mozambique, including the financial arms of the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Italy. In multiple reports and meetings, we and our partners have warned companies, banks and states about the risks associated with this project and the serious flaws in the human rights due diligence carried out by TotalEnergies [2]. TotalEnergies' responsibility is again today called into question by this reporting on further alleged atrocities surrounding the gas project"*.

The article outlines alleged events in July-September 2021, three months after a major insurgent attack on Palma town that spurred increased militarisation of the region. According to the article, Mozambican troops assaulted hundreds of civilians who were seeking safety, and imprisoned the men in windowless, metal shipping containers near the entrance of the Mozambique LNG site. The article reports that men - 180 to 250 individuals - were detained for 3 months, denied water, starved, beaten, suffocated, tortured, stabbed and, finally, most of them "disappeared". Only 26 of the prisoners are estimated by the investigation team to have survived." Women were subjected to humiliation and repeated sexual assault for a day or two, before being released.

Alex Perry has previously published articles about the violent conflict in the province of Cabo Delgado and the controversial impacts of the Mozambique LNG project. In the aftermath of the March and April 2021 insurgent attacks on the town of Palma, he conducted in-depth research to uncover the number of fatalities incurred during the massacre [3]. The attacks led to TotalEnergies' declaration of *force majeure* and the suspension of the project in April 2021.

A legal complaint was filed in 2023 by victims' families and attack survivors, accusing the French energy company of failing to protect its subcontractors and failing to provide fuel so that helicopters could evacuate civilians during the Palma attack [4]. Following the complaint, the French public prosecutor asked TotalEnergies' for comments on the complaint to then decide whether to pursue the case, close it or carry out further investigations [5].

Amnesty International accused the Mozambican security forces of war crimes in 2021 [6]. Until recently, TotalEnergies was directly providing equipment and financial compensation to the Joint Task Force (JTF) of the Mozambican army under an agreement that the JTF would "ensure the security" of the project

activities - and now pays the government instead [7]. A 2023 report commissioned by TotalEnergies itself concluded that a permanent link between Mozambique LNG and the Mozambican army “would have the effect [...] of making the project a party to the conflict” in the meaning of the Geneva Convention. [8].

State and private actors involved in the financial support [9] of the project have been warned about the threats the project poses to regional security and human rights, as well as the climate and environmental impacts [10]. Information obtained via Freedom of Information requests has revealed that despite these warnings, as well as concerns expressed by decision makers, support for the project was pushed through [11].

The Politico journalistic investigation into this massacre draws fresh attention to TotalEnergies' controversial links to the Mozambican army, and specifically its relationship with the forces accused of severe crimes that might be considered war crimes. According to the article, “The commandos were based on TotalEnergies' compound. They ran their detention-and-execution operation from the petroleum giant's gatehouse.” The Mozambican commando unit was furthermore reported to be led by an officer who said his mission was to protect the “project of Total”. The managing director of Mozambique LNG project, Maxime Rabilloud, says TotalEnergies had “no knowledge of the alleged events described”, nor “any information indicating that such events took place”. In addition, Rabilloud stated that the company had no presence on the ground at the time of the alleged events and is taking the “message very seriously given the gravity of the allegations”. The article reports that the Mozambican ministry of defense and the Mozambican presidency did not reply to requests for comment.

The article asserts, “there are grounds for a prosecutor to think that Mozambique LNG and its parent company TotalEnergies had sufficient cause to investigate whether human rights abuses were being committed by its defenders in its absence.”

The NGOs behind the "Say No to Gas! in Mozambique" campaign call on all public and private actors involved in the project and its financing to immediately act to ensure truth, justice and reparation for the survivors and the victims' families. They call for an immediate official investigation on the events and on TotalEnergies' potential role, due to its cooperation with security forces that are accused of severe crimes, including rape, murder, torture, which may constitute war crimes.

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## Notes

[1] Perry, A. 2024. *"All must be beheaded": Allegations of atrocities at French energy giant's African*

*stronghold*'. Politico. Published 26 September 2024. <https://www.politico.eu/article/totalenergies-mozambique-patrick-pouyanne-atrocites-afunji-palma-cabo-delgado-al-shabab-isis/>

[2] Uprights, July 2023, 'Assessment of TotalEnergies' Mozambique LNG Project Human Rights due diligence'. <https://friendsoftheearth.eu/publication/totalenergies-fails-on-human-rights-in-mozambique-lng-project/>

[3] Perry, 2023. 'Palma massacre'. <https://www.alex-perry.com/palma-massacre/>  
The findings are published on the research platform ACLED (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data). <https://acleddata.com/knowledge-base/9-april-2024-update-new-fatality-estimate-for-the-2021-attack-on-palma-mozambique/>

Perry's research established that 1,193 Mozambican civilians were killed or went missing, and The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) confirmed 801 deaths.

[4] [www.amisdelaterre.org/communique-presse/total-faces-criminal-charges-in-french-courts-for-its-negligence-during-the-palma-attack-in-northern-mozambique/](http://www.amisdelaterre.org/communique-presse/total-faces-criminal-charges-in-french-courts-for-its-negligence-during-the-palma-attack-in-northern-mozambique/)

[5] [www.lemonde.fr/en/france/article/2024/05/04/france-probes-totalenergies-over-2021-mozambique-attack\\_6670395\\_7.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/en/france/article/2024/05/04/france-probes-totalenergies-over-2021-mozambique-attack_6670395_7.html)

[6] Amnesty International, 2021. 'What I saw is death: war crimes in Mozambique's forgotten Cape'. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr41/3545/2021/en/>

[7] [www.zitamar.com/inside-the-new-security-deal-between-mozambique-and-gas-project-investors/](http://www.zitamar.com/inside-the-new-security-deal-between-mozambique-and-gas-project-investors/)  
TotalEnergies, 2020, 'Total signs agreement with the Government of Mozambique regarding the security of Mozambique LNG project'. <https://totalenergies.com/media/news/press-releases/total-signs-agreement-government-mozambique-regarding-security-mozambique>

[8] Rufin and Glowacki, 2023. 'Report on the socioeconomic, humanitarian and human rights situation in the Palma-Afunji-Mocimboa area', page 20. Commissioned by TotalEnergies. [https://totalenergies.com/sites/g/files/nytnzq121/files/documents/2023-05/Mozambique\\_LNG\\_report.pdf](https://totalenergies.com/sites/g/files/nytnzq121/files/documents/2023-05/Mozambique_LNG_report.pdf)

[9] 28 financial institutions took part in the 14.9 billion dollars project financing in July 2020. ECAs include Export Import Bank of the United States (US EXIM), UK Export Finance (UKEF), Servizi Assicurativi del Commercio Estero (SACE), Atradius Dutch State Business (ADSB). Commercial banks include Société Générale (the financial advisor of TotalEnergies for the project), Crédit Agricole, JPMorgan, Mizuho Bank, Standard Chartered Bank. See full list: [www.amisdelaterre.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/summary----financial-institutions-involvement-in-the-mozambique-lng-gas-project-2.pdf](http://www.amisdelaterre.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/summary----financial-institutions-involvement-in-the-mozambique-lng-gas-project-2.pdf)

[10] The Mozambique LNG project will produce between 3.3 and 4.5 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent over its lifecycle, more than the combined annual greenhouse gas emissions of all 27 EU countries. Friends of the Earth EWNI and the New Economics Foundation, October 2021. Tip of the iceberg : the future of fossil fuel extraction. <https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/print/pdf/node/237>

[11] Knoote and Rosenhard, 'Acceptable Risk? How the security threat in Cabo Delgado was ignored for the benefit of 'The Netherlands Ltd.', June 2024, Milieudéfensie and Both Ends. <https://en.milieudéfensie.nl/news/government-wrong-again-mozambique-gas>