

Minister of Interior
Jaime Basílio Monteiro
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Dear Minister Jaime Basílio Monteiro,

I am writing to you on the case of 16 people (11 refugees and five asylum seekers, including one woman), who are currently detained at the Third Police Station in Pemba city, Cabo Delgado province. According to the 16 refugees and asylum seekers, they have not been receiving adequate food or necessary medical care. At one point, they were kept without food for 25 days in a row. The prison's conditions, including sanitation, have also deteriorated after Pemba city was hit by Cyclone Kenneth in April 2019.

The 16 were arbitrarily arrested by police and immigration officers in Maratane Camp in Nampula province, northern Mozambique on 17 January. According to testimonies from the refugees, they were hand-cuffed, beaten and arrested without a warrant. They were not informed of the reasons for their arrest and detention. On 19 January, they were transferred from Nampula city to the Third Police Station.

On 23 January, the government of Mozambique deported seven men from the group to their country of origin, the DRC. A Mozambican immigration officer forced them to board a flight to Kinshasa, DRC, without their being notified of a deportation order, or being permitted to challenge their deportation. They were denied entry at the airport in Kinshasa as immigration officials claimed that the emergency travel documents issued in their names by the Cabo Delgado Provincial Directorate of Immigration did not prove their DRC citizenship. The men were not allowed to be in possession of these travel documents during deportation. They were held for three days at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport in Nairobi, Kenya, waiting to board a flight back to Mozambique. They were returned to Pemba city on 26 January and taken to the Third Police Station, where they are detained currently.

On 12 March, lawyers filed an application for the provisional release of the 16 refugees and asylum seekers' and the Pemba Provincial Court has yet to rule on the request.

I urge you to:

- Ensure the immediate release of the 16 refugees and asylum seekers and allow them to return to the Maratane Camp in Nampula province, and under no circumstances deport them to their countries of origin or to any other country in which they would be at risk of serious human rights violations, in line with Mozambique's international human rights obligations;
- Ensure that, pending their release, the 16 refugees and asylum seekers' conditions of detention are in line with international standards, including access to food, water and adequate health care.

Yours sincerely,