

FORGETTING OR DENIAL OF TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE IN MOZAMBIQUE: AN ANALYSIS OF THE MUEDA AND WIRIAMU GENOCIDES

ESQUECIMENTO OU NEGAÇÃO DA JUSTIÇA DE TRANSIÇÃO EM MOÇAMBIQUE: UMA ANÁLISE DOS GENOCÍDIOS DE MUEDA E WIRIAMU

EL OLVIDO O LA NEGACIÓN DE LA JUSTICIA TRANSICIONAL EN MOZAMBIQUE: UN ANÁLISIS DE LOS GENOCIDIOS DE MUEDA Y WIRIAMU

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ABSTRACT

Contextualization: This article analyzes the issue of the absence of transitional justice regarding the genocides that occurred in Mozambique, within the framework of the national liberation struggle against Portuguese imperialism, during which several massacres were recorded, particularly the Mueda Massacre and the Wiriamu Massacre, considered the most emblematic and tragic.

Objective: In this context, the article aims to explore the factors that prevented full accountability for the crimes against humanity perpetrated in Mozambique and, at the

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same time, seeks to understand the dimension of the compulsory forgetting imposed on the victims' families, who continue to demand justice for their relatives.

Method: The research adopted a bibliographic and analytical approach, based on the review of legal literature and Mozambican historiography, primarily exploring the works of Felícia Cabrita, Mustafah Dhada, and André Nogueira, authors who specifically address the Wiriamu Massacre.

Results: The analysis revealed that Portugal has not fully assumed responsibility for the genocides of Wiriamu and Mueda. In other words, the victims of these crimes against humanity were neither compensated nor reimbursed by the Portuguese government, which was responsible for these atrocities.

Conclusions: It is concluded that the genocides perpetrated in Mozambique require proper reparation for the victims and their families, who still suffer from the social and emotional consequences of these events. At the same time, it is the responsibility of the Mozambican government to demand from Portugal this historical reparation, which remains unresolved.

Keywords: transitional justice; accountability; forgetting; Mueda and Wiriamu massacre.

RESUMO

Contextualização: O presente artigo analisa a questão da ausência de justiça de transição em relação aos genocídios ocorridos em Moçambique, no âmbito da luta de libertação nacional contra o imperialismo português, durante a qual foram registrados vários massacres, sobretudo o Massacre de Mueda e o Massacre de Wiriamu, considerados os mais emblemáticos e trágicos.

Objetivo: Neste contexto, o artigo visa explorar os fatores que impediram uma responsabilização integral pelos crimes contra a humanidade perpetrados em Moçambique e, ao mesmo tempo, busca compreender a dimensão do esquecimento compulsório imposto aos familiares das vítimas, que ainda clamam por justiça em relação aos seus parentes.

Método: A pesquisa adotou uma abordagem bibliográfica e analítica, com base na revisão da literatura jurídica e da historiografia moçambicana, explorando principalmente as obras de Felícia Cabrita, Mustafah Dhada e André Nogueira, autores que tratam especificamente do Massacre de Wiriamu.

Resultados: A análise permitiu constatar que Portugal não se responsabilizou integralmente pelos genocídios de Wiriamu e de Mueda. Ou seja, as vítimas desses crimes contra a humanidade não foram compensadas nem ressarcidas pelo governo português, responsável por tais atrocidades.

Conclusões: Conclui-se que os genocídios perpetrados em Moçambique exigem a devida reparação às vítimas e aos seus familiares, que ainda sofrem as sequelas sociais e emocionais decorrentes desses acontecimentos. Cabe, ao mesmo tempo, ao governo de Moçambique exigir de Portugal essa reparação histórica, que permanece pendente.

Palavras-chave: justiça de transição; responsabilização; esquecimento; massacre de Mueda e Wiriamu.

RESUMEN

Contextualización: El presente artículo analiza la cuestión de la ausencia de justicia transicional en relación con los genocidios ocurridos en Mozambique, en el marco de la lucha de liberación nacional contra el imperialismo portugués, durante la cual se registraron varias masacres, especialmente la Masacre de Mueda y la Masacre de Wiriamu, consideradas las más emblemáticas y trágicas.

Objetivo: En este contexto, el artículo tiene como objetivo explorar los factores que impidieron una responsabilización plena por los crímenes de lesa humanidad perpetrados en Mozambique y, al mismo tiempo, busca comprender la dimensión del olvido compulsivo impuesto a los familiares de las víctimas, quienes aún reclaman justicia por sus parientes.

Método: La investigación adoptó un enfoque bibliográfico y analítico, basado en la revisión de la literatura jurídica y de la historiografía mozambiqueña, explorando principalmente las obras de Felícia Cabrita, Mustafah Dhada y André Nogueira, autores que abordan específicamente la Masacre de Wiriamu.

Resultados: El análisis permitió constatar que Portugal no ha asumido plenamente la responsabilidad por los genocidios de Wiriamu y de Mueda. Es decir, las víctimas de estos crímenes de lesa humanidad no fueron compensadas ni indemnizadas por el gobierno portugués, responsable de tales atrocidades.

Conclusiones: Se concluye que los genocidios perpetrados en Mozambique requieren la debida reparación para las víctimas y sus familiares, quienes aún sufren las secuelas sociales y emocionales derivadas de estos acontecimientos. Al mismo tiempo, corresponde al gobierno de Mozambique exigir a Portugal esta reparación histórica, que aún permanece pendiente.

Palabras clave: justicia transicional; rendición de cuentas; olvido; masacre de Mueda y masacre de Wiriamu.

1 INTRODUCTION

The slave trade, slavery, genocide, forced labour, the rape of Black women, apartheid policies, and the exploitation of material resources are memories that resonate

in the lives of every Mozambican who was a victim of European imperialism—particularly Portuguese imperialism. Through a supposed racial hierarchy, this system subjugated individuals and violated the rights and dignity of many Mozambicans. To this day, these injustices have not been fully addressed or repaired, whether from a legal, economic, political, social, or psychological perspective.

Among these forms of violence, it is important to highlight that Mozambique experienced numerous cases of genocide and massacres during the armed struggle against Portuguese colonialism. The most notable are the massacres of Mueda and Wiriamu, in which civilians—including children, women, and the elderly—were killed while resisting Portuguese domination.

The Mueda massacre took place on 16 July 1960, when an undetermined number of civilians were killed during an administrative meeting between Portuguese authorities and the Mozambique African National Union (MANU), which opposed colonial rule. The likely cause of this massacre was a demonstration of force by Portuguese authorities against Mozambican citizens.

The second massacre occurred in 1972, in the province of Tete, during the national liberation struggle between the Portuguese state and FRELIMO (the Mozambique Liberation Front). Civilians were again targeted, leading to the destruction of four villages. Many people were burned alive by grenades thrown by Portuguese military forces, and there are also reports of sexual violence against women prior to the massacre.

Regarding this latter atrocity, the Portuguese government issued only a formal apology in 2022—approximately 50 years later. This delayed response reflects a lack of full acknowledgment and public accountability on the part of Portuguese institutions. These crimes against humanity have, to a significant extent, been minimized by the Portuguese authorities.

In this context, the aim of this article is to examine the reasons behind the absence of transitional justice in Mozambique in relation to the Portuguese state, which committed various crimes against humanity—acts that had already been prohibited since the end of the Second World War. Furthermore, it seeks to assess whether there has been any form of comprehensive accountability, whether in criminal, economic, political, or social terms. To this end, the research will be conducted through a bibliographical review, drawing on books, official documents, and reports, and will be guided by a critical analytical approach.

2 BETWEEN THE EXAMPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA AND THE REPUBLIC OF MOZAMBIQUE IN THE FIELD OF TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

There are relatively few records of transitional justice in Mozambique, especially when compared to South Africa, which has demonstrated a more structured and effective

approach in this domain. It is important to note that South Africa was initially colonised by the Dutch and later by the British, under a system characterised by indirect colonial administration. This system developed over long periods and was marked by slavery, apartheid, human rights violations, genocide, and other forms of oppression inflicted upon the Black population since the arrival of Europeans in 1487. After prolonged periods of domination, South Africa achieved its independence in 1961, followed by the official end of apartheid in 1994 (Pinto, 2007, p. 5).

In 1995, South Africa established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The hearings began in 1996, and a five-volume report was published in October 1998. More than 23,000 victims and witnesses were heard, over 2,000 of them in public hearings (Pinto, 2007). This process played a crucial role in consolidating a democratic environment in the country and marked a paradigm shift in addressing crimes against humanity.

Transitional justice thus became a significant milestone and an effective mechanism for confronting the legacy and consequences of a racist and violent past. This past had been institutionalised since 1948 through a series of laws that enforced racial segregation, separating white and Black populations in terms of rights, access to resources, and social and institutional treatment. Among these laws, the Land Act of 1913 restricted Black land ownership to no more than 13% of the country's total territory, corresponding largely to the so-called bantustans (Pinto, 2007).

In addition, numerous other laws reinforced the system of racial segregation, including:

- a) the prohibition of marriages between white and Black individuals (1949);
- b) the mandatory racial classification of all South Africans (white, Black, or mixed race) (1950);
- c) the prohibition of Black people from residing in or accessing certain urban areas (1950s);
- d) the establishment of bantustans—territories designated exclusively for Black populations (1951);
- e) the prohibition of Black individuals from using certain public facilities, such as drinking fountains and public toilets (1953);
- f) the creation of a segregated education system for children in the bantustans (1953);
- g) the immigration act of 1970, which restricted the entry of Black individuals and facilitated the deportation of so-called “illegal” immigrants;
- h) the group areas act of 1950, which enforced spatial segregation by assigning different racial groups to designated residential areas (Pinto, 2007).

3 MOZAMBIKAN CONTEXT

The Portuguese arrived in Mozambique in 1498, and colonial administration was established shortly thereafter. This marked the beginning of a long period of exploitation, enslavement, and various forms of violence against the local population. Initially, European colonial penetration was primarily aimed at the extraction of material resources and the expansion of trade. Over time, however, it evolved into a system centred on the slave trade and the systematic and often brutal violation of human rights.

Unlike South Africa, where apartheid was formally institutionalised through political and legal instruments, Mozambique also experienced laws and practices that enforced violent forms of oppression and racial discrimination. Although apartheid was not codified in the same explicit manner, it was effectively present in practice across most Portuguese colonies, including Mozambique, and was grounded in the ideology of white racial superiority over Black populations. Social discrimination manifested in ways similar to apartheid, including the segregation of public spaces between whites and Blacks, even if not formally legislated. There were also significant inequalities in access to education, employment, and other social opportunities.

It is also important to highlight the system of forced labour known as *xibalo*, which became institutionalised in Mozambique, particularly from 1930 onwards, following António de Oliveira Salazar's rise to power and the consolidation of the *Estado Novo* regime in Portugal. This system represented a deeply oppressive structure that violated the dignity of the native population, often referred to as "indigenous" (Thomaz, 2012, p. 8). Under this labour regime, workers' rights, working hours, and basic human dignity were systematically disregarded, reflecting a broader framework of structural racism directed at the Black population.

In addition to these institutionalised forms of oppression, Mozambique also experienced various acts of genocide and other crimes against humanity carried out by the Portuguese colonial authorities during the national liberation struggle.

After independence, many of these serious crimes were neither properly investigated nor judicially addressed. Instead, they were largely neglected at the institutional level by the Mozambican political elite, rather than by the will of the population. As a result, colonial administrators and officials of the overseas provinces, including Mozambique, were not held accountable for their actions.

One of the most emblematic cases is the Mueda massacre, which took place on 16 July 1960. On that day, an undetermined number of Mozambicans were killed while protesting against the colonial regime. The incident occurred following an administrative meeting in the district of Mueda, located in northern Mozambique. At the end of the meeting, Portuguese colonial authorities opened fire on the population, resulting in a death toll that remains unknown. The meeting had reportedly been requested by the

Mozambique African National Union (MANU), one of the main organisations advocating for independence in the region (Nogueira, 2019).

According to MANU, there was no clear or explicit justification for the massacre. It is widely believed that the violence constituted a demonstration of power by Portuguese authorities, aimed at suppressing the growing pro-independence movement among the Mozambican population of Mueda (Nogueira, 2019).

Despite the gravity of these violations, they were not seriously investigated by either the Mozambican or the Portuguese governments. There is no evidence of criminal accountability or meaningful reparations within a transitional justice framework. Following independence in 1975, these crimes were not prosecuted or addressed through formal transitional mechanisms.

Another particularly brutal episode was the Wiriamu massacre, which occurred in a region along the Zambezi River, described at the time by Catholic missionaries as a “forgotten land” (Afonso; Gomes, 2010, p. 233-234). On 16 December 1972, one of the most violent operations carried out by Portuguese colonial forces took place, known as the Wiriamu Massacre. This military operation, codenamed “Marosca,” involved commandos and agents of the PIDE/DGS and targeted several villages in the Tete region, including Wiriamu, Juwau, Djemusse, Riacho, and Chaworha.

Following aerial bombardments, military forces entered the villages, unleashing widespread violence. The killings spread across these communities along the Zambezi River and were carried out through various inhumane methods. Hundreds of civilians, including women and children, were killed. Many victims were locked inside huts and burned alive with incendiary grenades, while others were executed by gunfire (Afonso; Gomes, 2010, p. 233-234).

Still in Cabrita (2008, p. 123) words, she adds the following:

Soldiers destroyed huts, infrastructures and villages, looted property, opened fire on people whose bodies were then placed, with some living ones in between, on funeral pyres to be consumed by the fire. 385 people are thought to have died, around a third of the 1,350 inhabitants of the five villages. The list of victims and the account of the events were compiled by Domingo Kansande and Father Domingos Ferrão, who passed on the information to Spanish and Dutch priests. The massacre was publicised by the English priest Adrian Hastings in the British newspaper “The Times” on 10 July 1973, days before Marcelo Caetano’s visit to London. The case would also reach the United Nations Organisation.

The journalist goes on to say the following about the Wiriamu massacre:

Two years before the April Revolution, the special troops and some members of the DGS, the state secret service, killed 400 people in record time. They search for the enemy’s base, but find defenceless villages with only unarmed women, children and old people. Experiments are carried out. A soldier opens

the womb of a pregnant woman and shows her the sex of the foetus. Others place the barrels of their guns in the mouths of newborn babies, like a bottle. And the maidens, after satisfying the urge of the defenders of the homeland, are slaughtered. It was just another atrocity committed by the colonial army, but it made headlines in the foreign press because missionaries denounced it to international public opinion (Cabrita, 2008, p. 123).

Journalist Felícia Cabrita also reports that some of the soldiers who carried out the operation were still alive. One of them, Gonçalo Fevereiro, lived in the Algarve. However, he did not cooperate sufficiently in the interview conducted by the journalist and did not provide any further details that could help uncover the truth about what had happened in Wiriamu. He merely referred to the information contained in the government's report on the operation, which was largely false and mentioned only around a dozen deaths.

She then got in touch with Joaquim Pacheco, one of the men who also took part in the operation. He told her about the children and women he had killed in the village of Wiriamu, in Mozambique, without showing any regret.

In this context, it should be emphasised that the soldiers who participated in this genocidal operation have not been held accountable by the Portuguese government. There was, so to speak, a trivialisation of the genocide by the Portuguese state itself.

She also reports on how brutal and savage this operation and others were, often involving the rape of women and children, who were then shot dead. One of the examples cited by the author was recounted by one of the military men involved, namely Joaquim Pacheco:

The blood urged him on and, still touched by the energy of death, the Alentejo discovered three maidens in a hut. He always needed a bit of peace and quiet at times, and while his comrades were having fun with the others, he took the youngest one out onto the balcony. She was the prettiest and most coveted mulatto. "I'm the first, I discovered her." They don't speak the same language, but Joaquim makes a gesture and she lies down. There's no need to use force, the young woman surrenders. He didn't kill her afterwards, he lacked the courage. "She behaved well, she helped, she didn't stand still" (Cabrita, 2008, p. 125).

The slaughter, the rape, and the violence inflicted on defenseless people in the Wiriamu massacre were treated as a spectacle for the Portuguese military, who drew satisfaction and a sense of military virility from perpetrating all kinds of violence against individuals they deemed savage and devoid of soul or spirit. The pain of these victims did not emotionally affect the commanders, ensigns, or other soldiers involved in this theatrical display of suffering inflicted on Black bodies, which, for the Portuguese military, were not recognized as human bodies but as objects stripped of a humanity they considered fundamentally different from their own (Dhada, 2015).

This operation took place in the province of Tete, which the soldiers considered a place where God was absent, due to the extreme heat of the region. If these people were men abandoned by God, then killing them would, in the military's view, be a favor to the population—a belief that drove those who carried out Operation Morosca in Wiriamu.

4 WHY THE ATTEMPT TO ERASE THESE TRUTHS AND MEMORIES IN THE MOZAMBIKAN CONTEXT

There is no doubt that the Mozambican national liberation movements waged a major struggle against the Portuguese colonial state. However, there is a theory that Mozambique's independence in 1975 was also motivated by the Portuguese government's desire to respond to pressure and reprisals from the international community. According to this perspective, Mozambique's independence resulted from agreements and negotiations between Mozambican and Portuguese authorities, who had economic interests and concessions in Mozambique in the post-independence period. In this context, independence did not emerge solely from armed struggle, but from a combination of military pressure, international community efforts, and bilateral agreements between political elites, which allowed Mozambique to remain, to a certain extent, politically and economically linked to the Portuguese state.

In this regard, it is reasonable to emphasize that Mozambique has remained dependent on budgetary support from the Portuguese government, which still covers a significant portion of the Mozambican budget. This dependence highlights the lack of decision-making autonomy on certain issues, particularly in the area of holding perpetrators of crimes against humanity accountable crimes that occurred in the territory and should have been addressed through transitional justice at the time of independence in 1975. Unlike South Africa, a country with considerable economic potential that allowed the British population to cohabit in its territory post-independence, and which has been exemplary in implementing restorative transitional justice, Mozambique faced significant challenges. In the Mozambican context, it was difficult for an economically weakened country to demand criminal justice or accountability for the atrocious acts committed during colonial rule due to its economic and political dependence on the Portuguese state.

Moreover, the weakness of social media and the press during Mozambique's colonial era was evident, as many cases of abuse and atrocities were not reported internationally. Many denunciations were initiated by white European missionaries, who were often silenced by colonial authorities. Consequently, other records of genocide and sexual violence against women were neither properly denounced nor publicized, both domestically and internationally (Mcauliffe, 2013).

Among these missionaries, we must also acknowledge those who covered up the barbarities committed in Mozambique. This can be understood in light of the prevailing narcissistic racial hierarchy in social relations at the time, which considered evangelizing the native population as a primary objective of colonization. Being "uncivilized" was deemed a justification for excluding natives from social and religious recognition, which in turn rendered them more vulnerable to colonial violence, as they were not considered "children of God."

5 COMPULSORY FORGETTING OF GENOCIDES AND OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS: THE ROLE OF THE MOZAMBICAN GOVERNMENT

After Mozambique's independence in 1975, the country did not follow the example of South Africa, which in February 1994 convened a conference aimed at addressing the nefarious legacy of apartheid and finding ways to achieve reconciliation. It is important to emphasize that the initial discussions in South Africa were published in the dossier *Dealing with the Past: Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa* (Pinto, 2007).

In this context, South Africa confronted the painful memories of the past and sought to heal the traumas caused by apartheid. Victims and human rights offenders were heard and reconciled through restorative, rather than punitive, justice, led by Bishop Desmond Tutu. The participation of victims was crucial in fostering a collective public forgetting of the atrocities committed under British colonial rule. This process created space for the democratization of the country and the emergence of a society reconciled between whites and blacks, establishing mechanisms to prevent the recurrence of such events (Moffett, 2017).

In the Mozambican context, however, the post-independence government led by the FRELIMO party, which had spearheaded the armed struggle against Portuguese imperialism, did not fully address issues of truth, justice, accountability, or reconciliation. Such measures could have fostered voluntary public forgetting on the part of Mozambican citizens.

The post-colonial government, composed of Mozambicans, maintained various political and economic agreements with the Portuguese government. These agreements shaped the new transitional governance, which remained dependent on Portuguese support. From this perspective, one can infer a lack of autonomy on the part of the post-colonial Mozambican government, which for extended periods remained reliant on foreign policy decisions, particularly those of Portugal.

Against this backdrop, the Mozambican population, oppressed by genocides and other human rights violations, was neither heard nor included in any process that might have facilitated voluntary forgetting of the atrocities committed in Mozambique. There was no public truth and justice commission to assign responsibility for these macabre acts,

nor was there a mechanism for collective, voluntary forgetting without erasing memory (Dhada, 2015).

The responsibility for accountability rests with state institutions, which are tasked with investigating the truth, holding perpetrators accountable, and finding ways to confront the past by listening to victims or affected families. In this light, the tacit oblivion imposed on the Mozambican people has not healed past wounds, nor has it reconciled the present. Rather, it appears as a compulsory effort to avoid addressing the truth, leaving indelible marks to this day.

It is noteworthy that the Portuguese government ignored the genocide known as the "Wiriamu" massacre, and only in 2022—50 years later—did Prime Minister António Costa formally apologize for it. The massacre had been reported by the British press in 1973, yet it was ignored in Portugal for many years (Dhada, 2015).

The aggressor's failure to recognize the crime has obstructed opportunities for reparation and accountability for these human rights violations, which remained concealed for decades. Meanwhile, the victim state, Mozambique, bears the responsibility to pursue truth and justice domestically or internationally, and to hold the perpetrator state accountable for crimes against humanity (Dhada, 2015).

The Wiriamu and Moeda massacres constitute crimes against humanity, comparable to those judged by the Nuremberg Tribunal, as defined in Article 6 of the Nuremberg Statute. These are serious, inhumane offenses, including torture, slavery, genocide, and the extermination of groups (Almeida, 2017). These crimes were committed in various regions of Mozambique by the Portuguese government, with the genocides in Moeda and Wiriamu being the most emblematic. Their legacy continues to resonate in the collective memory of Mozambicans, as full justice for victims and their families has yet to be achieved.

The Nuremberg Statute defines crimes against humanity as follows:

Crimes against humanity: knowing, murder, extermination, slavery, deportation and other inhumane acts committed against the civilian population before or during the war, persecution for political, racial or religious reasons in the execution of those crimes that fall within the jurisdiction of the Court or related to them, whether or not they constitute a violation of the internal legislation of the country where they were perpetrated (United Nations, 1945).

6 AMNESTY WITHOUT THE VICTIM'S CONSENT

It is crucial to remember that the post-colonial Mozambican state adopted a communist-Marxist ideology. At the same time, President Samora Machel did not prioritize human rights; this issue was not central to the government's approach to justice and the re-establishment of human rights in a country struggling with new economic models derived from the Marxist-Leninist framework of the former Soviet Union (Kruks,

1987). In many ways, President Machel was an apologist for policies that contravened human rights and individual freedoms. Critics have characterized him as a dictatorial leader who persecuted certain religious groups, created re-education camps, executed political enemies in public squares, and denied private advocacy (Kruks, 1987). He also implemented measures that targeted dissenters, including arbitrary arrests, restrictions on the free movement of people and goods, and limitations on press freedom and freedom of expression.

During Mozambique's transitional period, the government negotiated with the former colonizer and received foreign aid to build the new state. Both countries failed to fully address the crimes against humanity committed during the war of liberation, enabling a political amnesty negotiated solely by elites, without input from the victims. This was a major public failure of the Mozambican state, which cooperated with the Portuguese government in silencing victims of violent aggression. The result was a demographic and human development crisis, particularly in the village of Wiriamu, which was effectively erased from the Mozambican map (Dhada, 2015). The Portuguese government justified these crimes by invoking a "state of exception," which suspended rights and legitimized barbaric actions against the enemy.

7 SILENCE AS A MECHANISM FOR ERASING MEMORY

The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission succeeded in creating a functional amnesty because it addressed truth and memory, sought to correct past wrongs, and enabled collective forgiveness while sustaining peace. Bishop Desmond Tutu proposed restorative justice through forgiveness, grounded in biblical principles, as a way to prevent cyclical violence (Ost, 1999). The British government acknowledged human rights violations and did not attempt to hide the history of violence.

In contrast, in Mozambique, crimes have been less publicly denounced, and international media coverage has been limited. Nonetheless, genocides and crimes against humanity are timeless in normative terms and do not expire legally until justice is served. Psychologically and socially, these crimes cannot be symbolically forgotten by victims.

The history of genocide and massacres perpetrated in Mozambique by the Portuguese state has been obscured under the narrative of a "state of exception" and the pretext of disproportionate war between the Portuguese government, FRELIMO, and other liberation movements. The claim that these acts were part of wartime conduct is unfounded, as international norms established during the Second World War prohibited crimes against humanity. Yet, in the two genocides that occurred in Mozambique, civilians—including children and defenseless women—were deliberately killed, turning human lives into mere trophies or spectacles (Dhada, 2015).

7.1 LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND THE INABILITY TO PREVENT TRAUMATIC FUTURES

The absence of criminal accountability for inhumane acts exemplifies the trivialization of serious crimes (Arendt, 2014) and opens the door to repetition during conflicts, while denying justice to victims. Impunity obstructs healing for traumatized populations. From a legal perspective, accountability serves multiple functions: general deterrence, retribution, public awareness, and the prevention of future inhumane acts—essentially, promoting civility and respect for fundamental human rights.

The lack of accountability and reparation for genocidal atrocities perpetuates collective trauma, preventing reconciliation and obstructing the discovery of truth. For example, the absence of institutions to address the events in Mueda and Wiriamu ensures that the memory of violence remains alive for the victims. As Ost (1999) observes, unresolved historical crimes maintain a direct connection between past and present. The ghosts of Wiriamu's victims remain awake, demanding justice for the murdered children, women, and elderly, and their suffering continues to affect current and future Mozambican generations.

The failure to prosecute perpetrators or implement restorative justice for massacres such as Miriamu denies both individual and collective forgiveness. Portuguese public institutions' silence and denial have effectively erased memory, truth, and justice, resulting in impunity for both individuals and the state. This has denied the people of Mueda and Miriamu their "right to past time" the ability to reconcile with and correct historical injustices through legal, social, and political mechanisms (Ost, 1999). From a psychological perspective, acknowledging the past is essential for trauma reconciliation, forgiveness, and sustainable peaceful coexistence.

8 FUTURE POSSIBILITIES FOR REDRESS

The legacies of genocide, slavery, human trafficking, rape, and other forms of violence are embedded in Mozambique's collective memory. The present must confront this past through compensation measures and accountability for human rights violations, in line with the victims' wishes.

Mozambican and Portuguese authorities should establish a dedicated commission to restore truth and justice. The Portuguese government, as a primary actor, has an immediate duty to investigate atrocities, beginning with the Wiriamu massacre. Without such action, oral, documentary, and material evidence may deteriorate over time, further complicating historical reconstruction and collective reconciliation (Ost, 1999).

Until these issues are addressed, each generation of Mozambicans will continue to grapple with historical injustice, reinforcing distrust in the Portuguese state, which prefers

silence and the trivialization of historical crimes. Legal intervention is essential to link memory and time, enabling retroactive justice for the victims of Mueda and Wiriamu.

Mozambique, as a victim state, must pursue the creation of a Truth, Justice, and Accountability Commission to reconstruct the events of the armed struggle and genocides. This is an institutional responsibility of public authorities. Without connecting present memory to the past, key witnesses may be lost, and reconstructing an accurate historical narrative will be impossible. Lack of accountability consigns victims to forced oblivion, preventing forgiveness or reconciliation.

The Portuguese state, meanwhile, must recognize these atrocities, accept responsibility, and not remain neutral. War crimes are immune to collective oblivion or legal prescription if the traumas remain unresolved. Silence and denial leave time static in victims' collective memory, perpetuating their pain. Only by holding perpetrators accountable and allowing victims to confront them can forgiveness and reconciliation become possible.

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