

STATE CRIME IN GAZA

Assassination of the Activist and Human Rights Defender, Anastácio Matavele, by Agents of the Mozambique Republic Police *

On 7 February 2020, Mozambique will mark the passage of four months since the barbarous assassination, in broad daylight, of the Human Rights Defender in the electoral area, Anastácio Matavele, in Gaza. The murder of this activist and human rights defender was carried out by five agents of the Mozambique Republic Police, namely Euclídio Mapulasse, Edson Silica, Agapito Matavele (now a fugitive), Nóbrega Chaúque and Martins Williamo. The last two died in the traffic accident that followed the heinous crime. The operation was coordinated by two commanders of police sub-units, namely Tudelo Guirruogo, of the Special Operations Group (GOE), and Alfredo Macuácuá, of the Rapid Intervention Unit (UIR). The car used in the crime belongs to Henriques Machava, the current Mayor of Chibuto and a senior member of the Frelimo Party.

In a statement issued the day after the assassination, the General Command of the Police recognised that “the first degree murder was committed by 5 individuals, 4 of them agents of the Mozambique Republic Police, stationed at the Gaza Rapid Intervention sub-unit, at the service of the Special Operations Group, and a civilian, all duly identified in the records”. It ordered the immediate suspension from duty of the two commanders of those sub-units. It also set up a commission of inquiry with a deadline of 15 days to report back on the case. Today, almost four months later, the results of the inquiry have still not been made public

In this statement from the General Command, there was an attempt to omit the name of Agapito Matavele, the commander of the squad which murdered the citizen Anastácio Matavele. The



Command regarded Agapito Matavele as a civilian and not as a police agent, because it was attempting to explain the killing as a settling of accounts or a common crime involving policemen who were coordinated by a civilian. That is, they wanted to give the idea that this was not a state crime.



The decision to commit murder and those involved



the operation to assassinate Anastácio Matavele was prepared in detail, because it could not fail. The sharpshooters of the elite force were hand-picked, since the mission “was coming under pressure” from people not yet identified in the prosecution case (in case file no. 78/19).

The decision was taken on 19 September 2019, in a meeting at which the five shooters and their respective commanders were present, plus a representative of the State in Gaza province, whose name it has not yet been possible to ascertain. This was the person who gave the police agents coupons to buy fuel to supply the car used in the crime. On the same day, 19 September, the leader of the operation, Agapito Matavele, who is now on the run, gave instructions to Euclídio Mapulasse, Edson Silica, Nóbrega Chaúque and Martins Wiliamo “not to work shifts, because you have a mission”.

That mission was to assassinate Anastácio Matavele. As from that day, Euclídio Mapulasse and Edson Silica received the specific task to “follow the steps” of Anastácio Matavele, while waiting for the vehicle that would be used in the attack against the social activist and human rights defender. That is, they should check on the movements of Anastácio Matavele, to facilitate the operation, as soon as the vehicle, owned by Henriques Machava, mayor of

Chibuto municipality, reached their hands.

According to the provisional charge sheet from the Public Prosecutors’ Office, sent to the court, several preparatory meetings were held before the crime was consummated. One of the meetings took place on 5 October, in the Xirico Bar, near the Xai-Xai Beach crossroads. The meeting, which Agapito Matavele called by telephone, was intended to draw up a strategy for the murder of Anastácio Matavele, after an attempt to kidnap him had failed on 23 September.

Attending the meeting in the Xirico Bar was the commander of the Special Operations Group, Tudelo Guirruogo, who informed the others of the “good news” that the vehicle that would be used in the mission was now available. The conditions had been established for the physical elimination of Anastácio Matavele. Nóbrega Chaúque and Edson Silica were sent to receive the car, near the Joaquim Chissano Secondary School. They received the keys from people not identified in the prosecution document.

On 6 October, Tudelo Guirruogo, Edson Silica, Agapito Matavele, Martins Wiliamo, Nóbrega Chaúque and Euclídio Mapulasse held their final meeting before the murder of the activist and human rights defender, which took place 24 hours later.

The first five members of the group went to the house of Euclídio Mapulasse for a meeting. However, he was not at home. The group left a message with a neighbour, informing him that he should join the group that day in the central market of Xai-Xai city. As soon as he received the message, Euclídio Mapulasse took public transport (known as a “chapa”) to the meeting place. When he arrived, he joined the group in the vehicle used for the crime, and they drove towards the Xai-Xai beach crossroads.

There, before he left the vehicle, Tudelo Guirruogo, commander of the Special Operations Group, ordered Agapito Matavele, as head of the squad, to give instructions to the other members about the details of the mission, which consisted of opening fire against Anastácio Matavele.

The agents had clear instructions “to shoot at the legs of the victim, to prevent him from walking”, and not really to murder him, which is what happened.

The group had been informed that Anastácio Matavele would travel to Maputo on 7 October. So on that day, at 04:00 in the morning, Edson Silica, driving the vehicle used in the crime - a Toyota Mark X, with the number plate ADE 127 MC, owned by the mayor of Chibuto, Henriques Machava – and armed with a firearm, went to collect his colleagues, Euclídio Mapulasse, Agapito Matavele, Nóbrega Chaúque and Martins Wiliamo, from their homes.

Now complete, the group went to the Concha Motel, an old and well-known tourist resort, located in the upper part of the city, on National Highway Number One, where they planned to mount an ambush, since Anastácio Matavele would pass by there when he went to Maputo. Because time was passing and the victim did not show up, the five drove towards the Xai-Xai beach. They found that Anastácio Matavele’s vehicle was parked at the “Salgadinhos da Mamã Argentina”, a building located on the road leading to the Xai-Xai beach. Anastácio Matavele was inside the building chairing the opening ceremony of a training session for Gaza election observers from civil society. The squad waited for their victim at a bus stop near the building.

When it was 11.00, Anastácio Matavele left the building, entered his vehicle and drove towards Xai-Xai city. The group of five followed him. The shooters placed their vehicle, driven by Edson Silica, side by side with that of the victim. Immediately, the commander of the squad, Agapito Matavele, gave orders for the others to open fire. About ten shots were fired which struck the victim in various parts of his body.

Anastácio Matavele was declared dead 30 minutes after the shooting, at around 11.30. The medical report showed that he died violently as a consequence of the lesions suffered from the projectiles fired. The body bore the signs of multiple traumatic lesions caused by projectiles shot from a firearm. From the parts of the body hit and the severity of the injuries, it was concluded that the intention was to kill. The lesions described were lethal, and the forensic medical conclusion is that this was murder.

The killers left the scene of the crime at high speed heading towards Chongoene, where their barracks was located. But Nóbrega Chaúque and Martins Wiliamo also died violently, because the getaway vehicle careened out of control, hit three other cars and overturned, less than a kilometre from where Anastácio Matavele had been murdered. Edson Silica was injured and arrested.

Agapito Matavele fled, taking with him two guns that he had withdrawn from the arsenal of the UIR command. Tudelo Guirruogo and Januário Rungo (Chief of Staff of the UIR) returned the guns to the barracks. For his part, Rungo ordered Justino Muchanga, who was in charge of the arsenal, to sign the register controlling the weaponry, as proof that the guns had entered the arsenal.

During his escape, Agapito Matavele was in telephone communication with Tudelo Guirruogo. Indeed, Guirruogo was always in communication with Nóbrega Chaúque, Agapito Matavele and Edson Silica about the Anastácio Matavele operation. It was Tudelo Guirruogo, under the guidance of Alfredo Macuácuá, the UIR commander (who has also been arrested) who selected the team to carry out the mission of assassinating Matavele.

Guns taken from the barracks

the guns for the operation were taken by the five agents, namely Euclídio Mapulasse, Nóbrega Chaúque, Agapito Matavele, Martins Wiliamo and Edson Silica. For example, on 19 September, the date when it was decided that Anastácio Matavele should be murdered, Euclídio Mapulasse, Nóbrega Chaúque and Agapito Matavele took three firearms, with the reference numbers: AO32550,

AO36035 and AO37535. On 24 September, two more agents, namely Martins Wiliamo and Edson Silica, went to withdraw two more firearms. These were guns with the reference numbers AO36000 and AO36614.

On the following day, 25 September, Agapito Matavele strengthened the group with another firearm, an AK47, with the registration number 3724571.

Promotion promises kept

the policemen who murdered Anastácio Matavele were not promised money for their mission. They were promised promotion in their careers. And indeed, two months and 20 days after the assassination, the promises were kept for three of the five police agents who killed Matavele. They were promoted on 27 December 2019.

Edson Silica, now under arrest and awaiting trial, was promoted to the rank of Police Sub-Inspector while Euclídio Mapulasse (also in jail) and Agapito Matavele (who is still a fugitive) were promoted to the category of police sergeants, according to Dispatches no. 6412/GCG/2019 and no. 6447/GCG/2019, both signed on 27 December by the General Commander of the police, Bernardino Ra-

fael.

In the first dispatch, Bernardino Rafael grants "the rank of Sub-Inspector of Police, on the Medium Scale, with immediate effects (...) to Edson Cassiano de Lacerda Silica". He was number 5 on the list of names from Gaza province, with the code 09851485. Edson Silica was the driver of the vehicle used in the murder of Anastácio Matavele.

In the second dispatch, the General Commander of the Police grants "the rank of Police Sergeant, on the Medium Scale, with immediate effect" to Agapito Alberto Matavele and Euclídio Eugénio Mapulasse, who are numbers 2 and 7 on the Gaza list of names for promotion with the codes 12862529 and 09861562, respectively.

Conclusion

it has been proved that the five agents murdered Anastácio Matavele in an operation coordinated within State institutions. It has also been proved that all the weapons used were taken from the police arsenal in Gaza. There were meetings to prepare the assassination, coordinated by the police commanders, and involving some people linked to the State, such as Henriques Machava and Ricardo Manganhe, the Mayor of Chibuto and his subordinate, the supposed owners of the vehicle.

Instead of holding the agents involved responsible for their actions, they have been promoted to

higher ranks in the Mozambique Republic Police, three month after the murder, which proves that this act was indeed planned at higher levels of the State. Thus it was a State crime.

Four months after the crime, the Mozambican justice system is not doing enough to try and to sentence the assassins, and to compensate the victim's family.

In this context, the murder of Anastácio Matavele is a matter should be taken to international mechanisms in defence of human rights so that the Mozambican State may be held responsible for the acts of its agents.

*Investigation by Savana



EDITORIAL INFORMATION

Property: CDD – Centro para a Democracia e Desenvolvimento
Director: Prof. Adriano Nuvunga
Autor: Lazaro Mabunda and Armando Nhantumbo
Team: João Nhabanga Tinga, Agostinho Machava, Ilídio Nhantumbo, Denise Cruz, Isabel Macamo.
Layout: CDD

Address: Rua Eça de Queiroz, nº 45, Bairro da Coop,
Cidade de Maputo – Mozambique

 CDD_moz
E-mail: info@cddmoz.org
Website: <http://www.cddmoz.org>

PROGRAMMATIC PARTNER



Comissão Episcopal de Justiça e Paz,
Igreja Católica

FINANCING PARTNERS



COUNTERPART
INTERNATIONAL



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Embaixada da Suíça em Moçambique

