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### Cardoso Murder: Long Prison Sentences Imposed

Maputo, 31 Jan 2003 (AIM) - The Maputo City Court on Friday found all six men charged with the murder of Mozambique's top investigative journalist Carlos Cardoso guilty, and sentenced them to prison terms of up to 28 years and six months.

All six were also found guilty of the attempted murder of Cardoso's driver, Carlos Manjate, who was severely injured in the November 2000 ambush.

The man who received the longest jail term is Anibal dos Santos Junior ("Anibalzinho"). He was tried in absentia, because he was illicitly released from the Maputo top security prison on 1 September. However, South African police arrested him on the outskirts of Pretoria on Thursday, and he is likely to be extradited to Mozambique at the weekend.

The court found that Anibalzinho recruited the death squad that murdered Cardoso and drove the car used in the ambush.

He was sentenced to 22 years for first degree murder, 18 years for attempted murder, 10 years for criminal conspiracy, 10 years for the theft of the car used in the assassination, 9 years for illegal use of a firearm, 14 months for the use of a false passport, eight months for two counts of the use of false names, and four months for making false statements to the authorities.

This was consolidated into a single prison term of 28 years and six months. This is longer than the usual maximum of 24 years, partly because of the multiplicity of crimes committed, and partly because the court decided that Anibalzinho is "a habitual delinquent".

The two other members of the death squad, Carlitos Rachide (who fired the fatal shots), and Manuel Fernandes (who acted as look-out), each received a sentence of 23 years and six months. Telling marginally in their favour was the fact that they had both freely confessed to the crime, which the court regarded as a mitigating circumstance.

The other three accused were all found guilty of ordering the crime. Loan shark Momade Assife Abdul Satar ("Nini") was sentenced to 24 years imprisonment, and his brother, Ayob Abdul Satar, owner

of the Unicambios foreign exchange bureau, is to serve 23 years and three months. Their associate, former bank manager Vicente Ramaya, received a sentence of 23 years and six months.

In addition, the court ordered the six to pay compensation of 14 billion meticaís (588,000 US dollars) to Cardoso's two children, 13 year old Ibo and seven year old Milena, and 500 million meticaís (21,000 US dollars) to Carlos Manjate.

This is 100 per cent of the compensation which the lawyers for the Cardoso family and for Manjate had demanded. In addition, the court ordered Anibalzinho and Fernandes to pay 12,000 dollars to the company that owned the stolen Citi-Golf used in the murder, even though the company had not asked for compensation.

The court decreed that a variety of goods seized from the assassins are forfeit to the state. These include all the mobile phones that they were using illicitly in the prison, and cars purchased with the payment for the assassination.

One of these cars is a Mercedes-Benz acquired by Anibalzinho immediately after the murder. The presiding judge, Augusto Paulino, noted that this car "has miraculously returned to a relative of Anibalzinho from the police car park where it was being held". He issued a warrant ordering that the Mercedes be seized at once, and returned to police custody.

In the four hour ruling, giving the court's reasons for its verdict and sentence, Paulino stressed that "others" could also have been involved in the murder. The court agreed with the prosecution that the reason why the Satar brothers and Ramaya~ wanted to eliminate Cardoso was because of his investigation into the massive fraud in which the country's largest bank, the BCM, lost 144 billion meticaís (14 million dollars at the exchange rate of the time). The money was stolen at Ramaya's BCM branch, through accounts opened by members of the Abdul Satar family.

But Paulino did not rule the possibility that other people may have been involved in the assassination for "other motives".

The court believed that the murder had been plotted at conspiratorial meetings held in mid-2000 in the Rovuma hotel. But the judges believed that there had been other meetings "which included the participation of individuals other than the defendants". These meetings had taken place at Unicambios, at the house of rich businesswoman Candida Cossa, and at Expresso Tours, the company owned by Nyimpine Chissano, the oldest son of President Joaquim Chissano.

Paulino noted that these meetings, at which Nyimpine Chissano was allegedly present were reported by Nini Satar to Antonio

Frangoulis, the then head of the Maputo branch of the Criminal Investigation Police (PIC). Frangoulis reported this to his superiors (including Interior Minister Almerino Manhenje), following which he was sacked.

The court could neither condemn or acquit Nyimpine Chissano, since he is not a defendant in this case. But the fact that Paulino mentioned Nyimpine and Expresso Tours will certainly give further impetus to the separate case file, currently in the hands of the Public Prosecutor's Office, in which Chissano Jr is a suspect.  
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