

Mozambique - 2003 Annual Report

2002 saw a turning point for press freedom in Mozambique with the start of the trial of the accused killers of journalist Carlos Cardoso, two years after his murder.

The impatiently-awaited trial of the presumed killers of Mozambique's best-known journalist Carlos Cardoso finally began in November 2002 and quickly fulfilled expectations as a national event. The defendants already included three important and influential businessmen but the trial took an early surprise turn when one of the accused alleged that the son of President Joaquim Chissano had a role in the killing.

Many journalists have said they have changed their way of working since the death of Cardoso, who investigated financial corruption. Certain subjects are seen as having become much more sensitive and risky, and self-censorship has reached alarming levels.

New information about a journalist killed before 2002

Anibal Antonio dos Santos Junior, also known as Anibalzinho, one of the six persons accused in the murder of journalist **Carlos Cardoso**, escaped from Maputo high security prison on the night of 1 September 2002. The police offered no explanation for the escape, which fuelled concerns about serious problems within the prison system. One of the other six, businessman Momade Abdul Satar, an alleged instigator of the murder, had been placed in solitary confinement in August after being found with a mobile phone. Two days after Anibalzinho's escape, judicial authorities announced the arrest of the three persons in charge of the three different police agencies operating inside the prison. According to the official account, Anibalzinho escaped from inside a cell with three locks that needed an officer from each of the three police agencies in order to be opened. Eight other police officers were arrested a few days later.

The pro-government weekly *Domingo* called for the resignation of interior minister Almerino Manhenje on 8 September. At the end of September, the independent weekly *Mediafax* accused the minister of complicity in Anibalzinho's escape. In an editorial, it said the minister directly controlled the prison's security. The trial of Cardoso's accused killers began on 18 November, two years after his murder. As a result of Anibalzinho's escape, there were only five defendants in the courtroom, installed within the high-security prison's perimeter wall because of fears of a "breach of the peace." Special measures were also taken to protect Judge Augusto Paulino. Journalists were allowed to attend.

One of the accused, Manuel Fernandes, alleged on the trial's second day that Cardoso's murder had been ordered by President Chissano's son, Nyimpine Chissano. The president reacted by publicly saying that justice must be done and the trial must go on, even if his son had been named. One of the businessmen on trial, the one who had been caught with a mobile phone,

testified on 20 November that he was acting at the behest of the president's son when he paid Anibalzinho to kill Cardoso. Another defendant, Carlos Rachid Cassamo, said to have been the one who fired the shots at Cardoso, also testified on 25 November that the president's son was the main instigator.

Called to testify before the court on 5 December, Nyimpine Chissano denied any involvement in Cardoso's murder. The judge adjourned the trial on 20 December in 6 January 2003 and banned the president's son from leaving the country. A week later, the attorney general announced that an investigation was under way to determine whether the president son's was in any way involved.

The editor of *Metical*, a faxed daily newspaper that investigated financial issues, including fraud, corruption and money laundering, Cardoso was gunned down on 22 November 2000 on Avenue Martires de Machava in Maputo. He had just left his office in his car, with his driver, when two men blocked their way and opened fire. Cardoso was hit in the head and died instantly. His driver was seriously injured. Before he died, Cardoso had been probing the embezzlement of 144 billion meticals (7 million euros) in the course of the privatisation of Mozambique's Banco Commercial. Among those he had named were the Abdul Satar brothers and Vicente Ramaya, the three businessmen accused in his murder. He had also mentioned President Chissano's son in his reports.

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