



Mozambique tries again to tell story of reporter's killing

Duncan Campbell in Maputo
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There is a bunch of young men and boys hanging around the corner of a street named Carlos Cardoso Avenue in Maputo. How many of them know who inspired the name? "He was a journalist who was murdered," answers one young man.

Why was he murdered? No one is sure. There is a lot of shrugging but, when asked if any of them wants to become a journalist, a forest of hands shoots up.

Carlos Cardoso was Mozambique's best-known journalist, a figure like Paul Foot in Britain or Seymour Hersh in the US, renowned for exposés and for challenging authority. He was shot dead during an investigation into corruption in 2000. He was 48.

Six people were convicted of involvement in his murder, but the man alleged to have pulled the trigger, Anibal "Anibalzinho" dos Santos, 33, slipped mysteriously out of prison last year and fled to Canada, where he fought extradition. While he was on the run, he was granted a retrial on the grounds he had been convicted in his absence.

Two weeks ago Anibalzinho was extradited back to Mozambique to face that retrial. This week he was being held in a police cell in Maputo guarded by more than 20 police officers. The country is waiting to see whether he will use the trial to name powerful figures who may have hired him.

Mr Cardoso was a symbol of free speech, and the case is seen by many as a test of the country's judicial and political credibility. Born into a Mozambique family of Portuguese extraction, he had been a radical since his teens.

As a student in Johannesburg he campaigned against apartheid and was briefly jailed for his activities before being deported back to Mozambique. He later worked as a journalist for the government's press agency and for the news sheets he founded, including Metical, for which he was working when he was killed.

Cardoso had been investigating the embezzlement of \$14m from the Banco Commercial and had received death threats. His car was stopped on his way home and he was shot dead in the street with an AK-47 assault rifle.

The six people convicted included wealthy local businessmen. During the trial, one of the defendants claimed that Nyimpine Chissano, the son of the then president, Joachim Chissano, had ordered the murder. He was questioned by the judge, Augusto Paulino, but denied the allegations and was not charged.

The trial, which was broadcast live, became a national event, with people listening to it on radios in the street. Cardoso's friends do not believe that the full story has yet unfolded.

"His death had a tremendous effect," said Mia Couto, a well-known author in Mozambique. "It touched people very deeply. You could say we have a free press - you are able to say the president is a bullshitter or whatever - but if you try and carry out a serious investigation and point fingers and say 'this guy is involved in this', then you create problems.

"There was no threat to Cardoso from the government institutions but they have privatised the function of repression so the threats come from gangs and bandits - but they are hired by someone. It is not so different from the rest of the world, from places like Russia."

Even if the Cardoso case is solved, there remains another equally disturbing murder to be investigated. Antonio Siba-Siba Macuacua, the young interim chairman of the Austral Bank, had been investigating massive and fraudulent unpaid debt to the bank when he was thrown to his death in the bank's stairwell in 2001. No one has been brought to trial for his killing.

Meanwhile, this week the organisation Reporters Without Borders called on the Mozambique authorities to protect Jeremias Langa, the outspoken news director of the television station Soico TV. He was kidnapped at gunpoint on

January 27 and told: "You're a journalist who talks too much ... You are going to die like Carlos Cardoso."
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