



CENTRO DE INTEGRIDADE PÚBLICA

Anticorrupção - Transparência - Integridade

HIDDEN DEBTS



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Hidden Debt Scandal: Mozambique Discloses Documents from the President's Office and Intelligence Services

By: **Borges Nhamirre***

The Mozambican government has finally accepted that lawyers from Peters & Peters can have access to some documents from the Office of the President of the Republic and from the State Intelligence and Security Service (SISE) related with the hidden debts, thus unblocking the holding of a trial in the London High Court¹.

The trial is scheduled for next October, but was at risk because of Mozambique's refusal to share documents with the court and with other stakeholders in the case. The judge in the case, Robin Knowles, has already admitted that the trial could go ahead, but insisted that the demands for divulging the documents remain².

In the week of 17 to 21 July, three specialists from Peters & Peters, the law firm hired by the Mozambican Attorney-General's Office, were in Maputo consulting documents from the Office of the President of the Republic, from the former Director of SISE, Lagos Lidimo, and from the former Defence Minister, Salvador Mtumuke.

The specialists from Peters & Peters who were in Maputo are Keith E. Oliver, head of the department of international affairs, Steffany William and Sarah Gabriel. Specifically, the specialists consulted digital archives and institutional e-mails of the mentioned individuals to see if they could find some relevant documents related with the hidden debts, which might be important for the trial.

Guebuza said he did not take documents when he left the Office

Access to documents related with the hidden debts included other figures from the top of the State leadership.

The former President of the Republic, **Armando Guebuza**, was asked to make available his equipment, such as personal computers, for consultation by the specialists of Peters & Peters, but he replied that he could not make them available, because he did not leave with any documents from the Presidency. So, Guebuza remitted the matter to the Office of President Nyusi to share any eventual documents with the specialists.

Isaltina Lucas, the National Director of the Treasury when the hidden debts were contracted, and one of the major figures who were absent during the hidden debts trial in Maputo, also had to grant access to her communication equipment to the specialists from Peters & Peters. Aware that they would find compromising data, she admitted to the English High Court that she did indeed receive money from Prinvest but justified this by claiming – like the others involved – that these were funds for joint investment projects with Jean Boustani.

Manuel Chang, before he was extradited to the United States, was also sought by the specialists from Peters & Peters to share data from his e-mail (*username and password*) in order to proceed to consult essential documents about the hidden debts. Chang was instructed to reply that he could no longer remember this information because of the length of time he had remained in prison.

¹ CIP (2023). Understand why the “hidden debts” trial in London is at risk of being cancelled. Available on <https://www.cipmoz.org/pt/2023/05/17/entenda-por-que-o-julgamento-das-dividas-ocultas-em-londres-esta-em-risco-de-ser-cancelado/> (consulted on 19 July 2023)

² CIP (2023). English court decides that hidden debts trial should go ahead even without publication of the secret documents – Read the ruling in full. Available on <https://www.cipmoz.org/pt/2023/07/09/tribunal-ingles-decide-que-julgamento-das-dividas-ocultas-deve-avancar-mesmo-sem-a-divulgacao-dos-documentos-secretos-leia-o-acordao-na-integra/> (consulted on 19 July 2023)

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Celso Correia, the “super-minister” of the Government of Filipe Nyusi, although at the time the hidden debts were contracted, he was not yet in the government, was asked to allow consultation of his communications and he agreed. However, it is alleged that no relevant documents were found.

Indeed, it is unlikely that, from the survey made, relevant documents would be found, mainly due to the passage of time since the contracting of the hidden debts. About ten years have passed, and many documents may have disappeared, or been deliberately deleted.

On 28 July there will be a sitting of the London High Court at which the judge will refer to the efforts made by the Republic of Mozambique to divulge the documents. Although it is almost certain that there will be a trial, the willingness of Mozambique to share documents may influence the decision of the court on the main request by Mozambique.

In the civil case on the hidden debts, begun by the Mozambican state in the United Kingdom, the Attorney-General’s Office is requesting annulment of the guarantees issued by Manuel Chang to approve the loans to ProIndicus (for 622 million dollars) and to Mozambique Asset Management (MAM) (for 535 million dollars). Mozambique is also asking for compensation for all the damage incurred during the hidden debts process. Damages are being demanded from companies of the Privinvest group, from Credit Suisse and from the former employees of Credit Suisse, who were involved in the contacting of the hidden debts.



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