

Suspected Islamist militants on trial in Pemba

The trial of 189 suspected Islamist militants is underway in a tent serving as an improvised courthouse inside a jail in Pemba, Mozambique. The accused have been charged in connection with attacks against police and civilians in the northern province of Cabo Delgado. A report on the [News24](#) site notes that Mozambicans, Tanzanians, Congolese, Somalis and Burundians are among the defendants and 42 are women. Over the last year, more than 50 people have been killed in assaults in the growing jihadist insurgency, with the militants reportedly seeking to impose Sharia law in the Muslim-majority province. They are charged with crimes including **homicide, use of prohibited weapons, crimes against state security and public disorder**. According to the charge sheet, the defendants last October carried out a coordinated attack against police near the town of Mocimboa da Praia, and later on the district police command. Two police officers were killed and five others seriously injured. The matter has been adjourned until next week, with the trial set to last until the start of next year.

The authorities say 90 people have died since Islamist militants attacks began last year in the north of the northern province of Cabo Delgado. The group, known locally as al-Shabab, was formed in 2015 as a religious organisation and has **no known links to the Somali jihadist group of the same name**. [BBC News](#) reports that it is believed to be making millions of dollars from selling timber and gemstones. 'The defence and security forces continue working to ensure that people who live in conflict prone areas work with us. All 28 million Mozambicans need to help to win this fight against the insurgents,' said Bernadino Rafael, the head of the Mozambican police force.