DECIDE REPORT

Mozambique, 23th November 2026

FIFTH DAY OF VENÂNCIO MONDLANE'S TRIAL MARKED BY QUESTIONING OF THE DEFENDANT BY THE ASSISTANT



The trial of Venâncio Mondlane, leader of the ANAMOLA party, continued this Monday (23 November 2026) at the Supreme Court in Maputo. The hearing began with the defence's request that the Assistant limit his questioning to the offences he had joined the proceedings in respect of, and was dominated by the questioning of the defendant by Rodrigo Rocha, who confronted him with excerpts from his live broadcasts. The defendant answered all the questions. The hearing was adjourned and will resume tomorrow, 24 November, at 10:00, with questioning by the defence.

Summary of the Day

- **Limits on the Assistant:** the defence asked that Rodrigo Rocha question the defendant only about the offences he had joined the proceedings in respect of, relating to terrorism. The judge reassured the defence, stating that the Assistant would not go beyond the scope of his role.
- **Evidence at any time:** the Assistant asked to submit audio recordings and a USB flash drive containing videos. The defence invoked Article 77, but Judge Carlos Mondlane held that the Assistant may submit evidence at any stage.
- **The weight of words:** Rodrigo Rocha confronted the defendant with excerpts from his live broadcasts. Venâncio Mondlane replied that these were opinions, metaphors and messages addressed to mobile network operators.
- **Amnesty International report:** the defendant undertook to add to the case file the report which points to the mobile network operators' failure to fulfil their social contract.

- Deaths and the "law of retaliation": the defendant argued that the communication and the deaths were separate events and referred to page 176 of the case file for verification of the dates.

1. **Opening of the hearing**

The trial began shortly after 10:20, with the usual signing of the minutes. This time, watches were not allowed into the courtroom, including non-digital ones.

2. **Preliminary issue: limits of the Assistant's participation**

First, the defence asked for it to be made clear that Rodrigo Rocha, on behalf of the Assistant, could question the defendant only about the offences he had joined the proceedings in respect of, relating to terrorism, and could not bring other offences into the questioning. The judge reassured the defence, stating that the Assistant would not go beyond what fell within his remit.

The Assistant began his intervention by reading out provisions of the law relating to terrorism in order to clarify the matter for the defence. He observed that some questions concerning the other offences could also be supported by that law, referring to the existence of a ruling to that effect.

3. **Questioning of the defendant by the Assistant**

Rodrigo Rocha began by saying that every politician should know how to weigh their words carefully, and then proceeded to question Venâncio Mondlane.

a) Taxes and fees

The Assistant asked the defendant what he meant, with reference to Articles 3, 17, 89 and 100. Venâncio Mondlane replied that those articles were not related to what he had said, since he had spoken about taxes, a subject connected with tax matters. He explained that, when he said people should not pay fees, he was not referring to any tax offence, because payment of the fee was optional. He also explained the relevant tax-law framework. He added that this had no connection with the destruction of infrastructure and asked for evidence supporting such a connection to be presented so that he could comment.

b) Submission of evidence by the Assistant

Rodrigo Rocha accepted the invitation and asked to submit audio recordings and a USB flash drive containing videos. The defence invoked Article 77 to argue that evidence could not be introduced at this stage. The Assistant cited an excerpt from Article 78, which had also been presented by the Public Prosecutor's Office, and Article 200, concerning the submission of evidence. He argued that the Assistant also had the role of submitting evidence and that it could be presented at any time, as provided by law. He further maintained that the defence could challenge it under the same Article 200.

Judge Carlos Mondlane stated that all participants in criminal proceedings have the opportunity to produce evidence, whether the Public Prosecutor's Office, the Assistant or the defence, in accordance with the general principle laid down by law, and that evidence is key in this type of case. He concluded that the Assistant may submit evidence at any time, pursuant to Article 385 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. The defence agreed with the judge's interpretation.

c) Message to mobile network operators and Amnesty International report

The Assistant confronted the defendant with a passage concerning the violation of rights and asked what a politician means when making such a statement, on the assumption that politicians should weigh their words carefully.

Venâncio Mondlane replied that it was merely an opinion or a message addressed to mobile network operators, calling on them to respect people's rights, and not an incitement.

At this point, the defendant made an important reference to the operators' failure to provide services as required and undertook to attach the Amnesty International report addressing these companies' failure to fulfil their social contract.

Asked what he expected his followers to do with the information in the video, he said it was clear who the message was addressed to: not his followers, but the operators. Rodrigo Rocha then asked how he expected the people to react if the operators failed to comply. The defendant repeated that the message was addressed to the operators, referring to Mozambican political language. The Assistant wanted to know whether the defendant was aware of events that had occurred after the video was published. He replied that he could comment if supporting evidence, such as the dates, were submitted.

Asked who made the broadcasts, he acknowledged that he did so himself, alone, using digital tools. He said that the people who follow him are peaceful, as he states in his videos.

d) Videos added to the case file

To support his claim that he had called for calm, the defendant asked for excerpts from the videos in Annex 15 to be viewed. In one of them, he says, he states that he knew nothing about the destabilisation plan, whose purpose was to attack shops and other targets, and that this was not the reason for the struggle. In another, he says that those who attack shops are not genuine demonstrators and are not part of the group; they should therefore be removed, or the group should distance itself from them.

e) Deaths of police officers and the "law of retaliation"

Rodrigo Rocha asked a question that the defendant considered out of context because it repeated something that had already been asked. Venâncio Mondlane said he had expected 99% of what the people did to consist of banging pots and staying at home, and that the terror had been caused by the police, using live ammunition.

The Assistant asked him whether he knew Valdo Wilson dos Santos, a SERNIC agent who was stoned to death and left behind a two-year-old child, and whether he considered that terrorism. The defendant replied that it was an inhumane act, but considered that classifying it as terrorism was a technical term for which, in his view, there was no basis in this case. Rodrigo Rocha suggested that the defendant could also use the metaphor in this case. Venâncio Mondlane replied that doing so would be forced, since a metaphor is something spontaneous.

The Assistant returned to the "law of retaliation" to ask whether the order had led to deaths. The defendant said that the death and the communication had to be considered separately, as they were entirely distinct events, and that there had been no further deaths of police officers after that, nor any failure to weigh his words. He asked that Annex be checked, at page 176, where, according to him, official information indicated that the last police officer had been killed on 3 January. The dates of 17 January, when the statement about the "law of retaliation" was made, and 20 January, when a police officer was killed in Manica at around 18:00, were also mentioned.

f) Metaphors and "25 bullets"

Rodrigo Rocha read a passage in which the defendant spoke of "a cake of live bullets" and "a pudding of tear gas", among other things, and asked what he meant. The defendant replied that this was simply a metaphor, in its purest form, and recalled that he had already said that live ammunition was an action of the State.

Next, the Assistant read a passage about “25 bullets” and “25 days of terror against murderers, corrupt people, liars and thieves”, and asked who those thieves were. Venâncio Mondlane replied: “I am still looking for them to this day.” He said he was looking for the murderers and that the “climate of terror” he intended to create was to put the cases on the front pages. Regarding other passages read by the Assistant, he stated that he had merely expressed his opinion, in the exercise of that right.

g) Toll gates and live broadcasts

After the break, Rodrigo Rocha questioned the defendant about posts and videos concerning “free passage”, including one in which, according to the Assistant, the companies that operate the toll gates were identified as targets. Venâncio Mondlane replied that he had made no message other than the one addressed to the entities that manage the toll gates. As for the relationship between not paying tolls and destruction, he replied, based on his previous answer, that there was none, and that he had indicated alternatives without taking away the freedom of anyone who wished to use the toll road or other routes.

Regarding the effect of his broadcasts, he said they were reminders of civic values and that he had spoken about several toll gates, giving his followers general guidance not to damage public or private property.

4. End of questioning and adjournment

Venâncio Mondlane answered all the questions. At the end, the Assistant said that one of the answers, concerning circulation, had not satisfied him because he felt he had not received an answer. The hearing was adjourned and will resume tomorrow with questioning by the defence.

Next hearing and points to follow

- **Tuesday, 24 November 2026, at 10:00, at the Supreme Court.**
- Questioning of the defendant by the defence.
- Submission to the case file of the Amnesty International report, promised by the defendant, concerning the mobile network operators’ failure to fulfil their social contract.
- Submission of the audio recordings and USB flash drive containing videos requested by the Assistant.
- Second week of December: a period mentioned at the end of the hearing, although the record does not clarify what is scheduled.

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