

Children as young as 11 decapitated in Mozambique by jihadists

From The [shadowy extremist group in Mozambique](#) which professes to have ties to Islamic State.

One 28-year-old mother said that the militants beheaded her 12-year-old son near where she was hiding with her three other children.

“That night our village was attacked and houses were burned. When it all started, I was at home with my four children,” she told humanitarians at Save the Children. “We tried to escape to the woods, but they took my eldest son and beheaded him. We couldn’t do anything because we would be killed too.”

The sheer brutality of the violence has shocked humanitarians and seasoned military personnel working in the region, who say they have never seen anything like it. People are often hacked to death and mutilated with machetes. Mass Islamic State-style beheadings have been reported.

Another 29-year-old survivor of the attacks by the militant group told Save the Children that armed men murdered her 11-year-old son and that she didn’t have a chance to say goodbye or give her son a proper burial. “After my 11-year-old son was killed, we understood that it was no longer safe to stay in my village. We fled to my father’s house in another village, but a few days later the attacks started there too.”

Reporting restrictions on journalists mean that little is known about the insurgents responsible for the attacks.

Locally the fighters are often referred to as ‘Al Shabaab’, in reference to the jihadist group which has brought Somalia to

its knees. The group claims to have pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group. Recently, the US State Department said that the insurgents are linked to the Middle Eastern group.

However, some analysts think the group's alignment to Islamic State is little more than a marketing ploy. A recent paper by Thomas Heyen-Dubé and Richard Rands at Oxford University argues that the armed group is not a Salafi-Jihadi movement and is not 'currently connected in any impactful way to [Islamic State]'. *I'm sure those bereaved young mothers take great comfort from their opinion.*

While other insurgencies in Africa such as in the Sahel or in Somalia have received major international attention, Mozambique has received almost no aid to help it fend off the tide of insecurity. This week, however, the US started a two-month-long mission to train Mozambican marines.

Cabo Delgado is a fabulously wealthy province blessed with precious stones and vast gas reserves. The attacks occur in the shadow of the largest investment project in sub-Saharan Africa, a \$20bn gas project run by Total with investments from France, Japan, the US and the UK. *Sounds a bit like Biafra in the 1960s? Mozambique has a large Anglican population, so much so that they asked and were admitted to the Commonwealth, despite never having been a British colony. Whether this will spark wider interest for their suffering remains to be seen.*