

Mass grave of decapitated bodies discovered in Mozambique

From the [*The Times*](#)

A mass grave containing the decapitated bodies of at least 12 people has been discovered near a hotel used by foreigners that was overrun by Islamic State militants in Mozambique. The 12 bodies were found under a large mango tree near the entrance of the Amarula Hotel, an establishment favoured by foreign contractors working on a nearby natural gas project run by the French oil giant Total.

“They were tied up and beheaded here,” Pedro da Silva, a police commander, said in footage broadcast by Mozambique’s TVM channel on Wednesday. . . There was security but the insurgents were stronger so they managed to break in and take 12 foreigners, tie their hands behind their backs and decapitated them all.”

Pedro da Silva, commander of the police station in the nearby village of Quitunda, said the bodies had since been buried in a mass grave at the spot. “In total there were 12. They were all foreigners, I don’t know what nationality, but they were all white,” he said. “They were tied up and beheaded here. I was the one directing the burial.”

Mr da Silva said he believed the victims were foreigners because they were white, but that he could not speculate on their nationalities. Mozambique has citizens of all colours including whites.

However, a source familiar with the operation in Pemba, the provincial capital of Cabo Delgado, told the Telegraph that the victims were black. The source said the bodies were so

decomposed they would be difficult to identify. Brigadier Vidigal Chongo, spokesperson for the Northern Operational Theatre, said the military had requested a forensics team to help identify the victims.

He was standing near the entrance to Amarula Lodge in the town of Palma, where about 200 people, mostly foreign workers, were besieged for days by militants linked to Islamic State. A group of 60 tried to escape in a convoy of 17 cars on March 26 but were ambushed outside the lodge gates. Seven cars managed to speed past the insurgents.

Two of those killed have been identified as Philip Mawer, a Briton from Somerset, and Adrian Nel, a South African, but the full scale of the casualties and the whereabouts of those still unaccounted for remains unclear. The fate of those travelling in the ten cars that were stopped by the jihadists, and another 100 or so people who did not join the convoy, is equally unclear. According to witnesses a number of South African contractors had taken refuge at the lodge.

Nel and Mawer ...(their) bodies were recovered last week by South African mercenaries working for the Dyck Advisory Group, a small private security firm hired by the Mozambican government to fight the insurgents. DAG completed its year-long contract and returned to South Africa last weekend.

A spokesman for the state police said that he could not verify da Silva's version of events, and that investigations were continuing.