

URGENT ACTION

OPPOSITION PARTY CHAIR MUST BE RELEASED

On 9 April 2025, Tanzanian police arrested Tundu Lissu, the Chairperson of the country's main opposition party, Chadema after holding a political rally in Mbinga town, southwest of Tanzania. He was then transferred to Dar es Salaam, more than 1,000 kilometres away by road during the night. Police used excessive force, including by firing teargas and shooting in the air to disperse his supporters who gathered around during the arrest. Police later charged Tundu Lissu with a non-bailable offence of treason – which carries the death penalty - alongside two other offences under the country's cybercrime laws. Tanzanian authorities must stop the repression of opposition leaders and immediately release Tundu Lissu, as he is detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his human rights.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

President Samia Suluhu Hassan

President's Office
Utumishi street, P.O. BOX 670,
Dodoma, Tanzania
Email: ps@utumishi.go.tz
Twitter: @SuluhuSamia

Dear President Hassan,

*I am writing to express grave concern about the arrest and arbitrary detention of opposition leader **Tundu Lissu**, the Chairperson of Chadema, the main opposition party in Tanzania.*

Tundu Lissu was arrested on 9 April after holding a political rally in Mbinga town, southwest of Tanzania. He was then transferred to Dar es Salaam, more than 1,000 kilometres away by road during the night. Police used excessive force, including by firing teargas and shooting in the air to disperse his supporters who gathered around during the arrest. On 10 April, he was charged with a capital and non-bailable offence of treason alongside two other offences under the country's cybercrime laws in relation to his social media posts calling for Tanzanians to boycott the forthcoming elections, citing the possibility of rigging. The charge of treason, under sections 39 and 40 of the Tanzanian Penal Code is non-bailable offence which carries the mandatory death penalty Tanzania retains the death penalty in law but has not executed since 1994.

On the morning of 24 April, police beat up and arrested dozens of people who tried to access Kisutu Resident Magistrate's Court in Dar es Salaam where Tundu Lissu's case came for hearing. Chadema's deputy chairperson John Heche and secretary general John Mnyika were among those arrested but were released later that night. Chadema's deputy secretary general further reported that police injured and killed one person in front of the court that morning. 23 people were beaten by police outside the court. Many had suffered cuts and bruises on various parts of their bodies including head, hands legs, back and shoulders. A woman and a man reported to Amnesty International that they had been sexually assaulted by the police.

Amnesty International has reported intensification of authoritarian practices and a vicious clampdown on dissent in recent years in Tanzania as the country heads to presidential and parliamentary elections due to take place in October 2025.

I urge your government to immediately and unconditionally release Tundu Lissu as he is detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his human rights. I also urge you to end all arbitrary arrests and the growing crackdown on opposition leaders ahead of the October 2025 general elections. I further urge you to refrain from all attacks on opposition party members, real or perceived government critics, human rights defenders and journalists and end all harassment and targeting of their important and legitimate work.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Tanzania will hold its seventh general election in October 2025 with President Samia Suluhu Hassan seeking a second five-year term. The elections come amid a campaign of repression by the incumbent government's first term targeting members and leaders of political opposition parties, individuals and organizations critical of the government.

On 12 April 2025, the Independent National Elections Commission (INEC), Tanzania's electoral commission, barred Chadema – the main opposition party- from contesting the October elections, asserting that the party had failed to sign a mandatory code of conduct agreement.

In 2024, [four government critics were forcibly disappeared and one was killed](#). The police prevented opposition members from holding meetings and other political gatherings, subjecting them to mass arrest, arbitrary detention, unlawful force. Journalists and others were denied their right to freedom of expression.

On 11 August 2024, police arrested Chadema party members, including Tundu Lissu, then-vice chairperson and former presidential candidate, John Mnyika, secretary general, Joseph Mbilinyi, a central committee member, more than 500 youth supporters and five journalists. They were arrested at, or on their way to, a meeting in Chadema's Nyasa office in Mbeya, in south-western Tanzania, ahead of International Youth Day on 12 August 2024. They were accused of violating a ban on a youth conference and planning a violent demonstration. The next day, police arrested party leaders Freeman Mbowe and John Pambalu after they went to Mbeya in response to the arrests. All party leaders were released on bail on 13 August 2024; the others were bailed in the following days. On 13 September 2024, the police announced a ban on all Chadema protests and on 23 September 2024 arrested Freeman Mbowe, Tundu Lissu and six other party officials in Dar es Salaam before planned protests against killings and abductions of government critics. They were released on bail the same day. Three journalists from Mwananchi Communications Ltd and East Africa TV were arrested while covering protests and released the same day.

Dioniz Kipanya, a Chadema party official, disappeared on 26 July 2024 when he left home following a telephone conversation with an unidentified person. Deusdedit Soka and Jacob Godwin Mlay, both Chadema youth activists, and Frank Mbise, a motorcycle taxi driver, were abducted by a group of men suspected to be police officers on 18 August 2024.

The body of Ali Mohamed Kibao, a senior Chadema member, was found on 8 September 2024. Suspected security agents had abducted him from a bus on 6 September 2024 while he was travelling home to Tanga from Dar es Salaam. According to a post-mortem, his body had been soaked in acid and bore signs of a beating.

On 17 October 2024, United Nations human rights experts [called](#) on Tanzania to end the ongoing and escalating pattern of human rights violations against opposition political party members, civil society organizations, journalists, Indigenous Peoples and human rights defenders.

International law and standards prohibit the imposition of the mandatory death penalty, as it denies the possibility of taking into account the circumstances in the case. Moreover, international law and standards require that the imposition of the death penalty be restricted to the "most serious crimes" involving intentional killing. The UN Human Rights Committee, the body tasked with the interpretation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which Tanzania acceded to in 1976, has stated in its General Comment no.36: "Under no circumstances can the death penalty ever be applied as a sanction against conduct the very criminalization of which violates the Covenant, including adultery, homosexuality, apostasy, establishing political opposition groups or offending a head of State. States parties that retain the death penalty for such offences commit a violation of their obligations under article 6, read alone and in conjunction with article 2 (2) of the Covenant, as well as of other provisions of the Covenant." Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception. As of today, 113 countries have abolished the death penalty for all crimes and 145 are abolitionist in law or practice.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English and Kiswahili

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 31 August 2025

Please check with the Amnesty International office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Tundu Lissu (He/him/his)