



# UNOPPOSED, UNCHECKED, UNJUST

“WAVE OF TERROR” SWEEPS TANZANIA AHEAD OF  
2025 VOTE

RESEARCH  
BRIEFING

AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL



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*Zanzibar's anti-riot police officers stand guard by a group of men sitting on the ground during an operation after the opposition called for protests in Stone Town, on October 29, 2020, as tensions rise while the results of the general election are being announced.*

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Despite previous warnings from Amnesty International's 2020 report, Tanzania authorities have intensified repression, using vague and over-broad laws to silence dissent ahead of the October 2025 elections. Between January 2024 and October 2025, Amnesty documented widespread abuses including enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests, torture and other ill-treatment, and extrajudicial killings. Freedoms of expression, movement, and peaceful assembly have been severely restricted.

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# GLOSSARY

WORD	DESCRIPTION
ACT-WAZALENDO	A Tanzanian opposition political party; full name: Alliance for Change and Transparency – Wazalendo.
ACHPR	African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights
AU	African Union.
AUEOM	African Union Election Observation Mission
CCM	<i>Chama Cha Mapinduzi</i> – the ruling party in Tanzania; translates to “Party of the Revolution.”
CHRAGG	Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance – Tanzania’s national human rights institution.
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DCI	Directorate of Criminal Investigations – a Tanzanian law enforcement agency.
EAC	East African Community
EACJ	East African Court of Justice.
ED	Enforced Disappearance
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission – Tanzania’s electoral body, formerly known as NEC.
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
JAMIIFORUMS	A Tanzanian online platform known for whistleblowing and public discourse.
MP	Member of Parliament.
NEC	National Electoral Commission – the former name of Tanzania’s electoral body, now INEC.
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization.
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.
RIG	Robben Island Guidelines – African Union guidelines on the prohibition and prevention of torture.
SADC	Southern African Development Community
TLS	Tanganyika Law Society – the bar association of mainland Tanzania.
TCRA	Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNCAT	United Nations Convention Against Torture
WGEID	Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances
X	Formerly known as Twitter.

# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Tanzania continues to face a deepening human rights crisis ahead of its October 2025 general elections. Despite findings and recommendations issued in Amnesty International's 2020 report "*Lawfare: Repression by Law ahead of Tanzania's General Elections*" highlighting the worrying human rights situation in the lead up to the 2020 polls and calling on the Tanzanian authorities to respect and uphold human rights throughout the vote and after<sup>1</sup>, the situation as the country heads to this year's election has deteriorated further. Authorities have intensified the use of repressive laws to silence dissent, targeting journalists, civil society, human rights defenders, and opposition voices.

Between January 2024 and October 2025, Amnesty International has documented widespread and systematic violations, including enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests, torture, unlawful killings, and severe restrictions on freedoms of movement, expression, and peaceful assembly. These actions reflect a deliberate strategy to suppress civic engagement and entrench power, undermining the fundamental rights of Tanzanians and eroding the integrity of the electoral process.

This briefing highlights how Tanzania's legal system lacks safeguards to protect political actors and citizens from state abuse. Vague and overbroad laws enable selective enforcement, undermining democratic participation and violating international human rights standards. The findings are based on verified information from diverse sources, including victims, witnesses, families, legal representatives, civil society groups, and media. Amnesty International's standard methodology was used, prioritizing source credibility, safety and confidentiality. Many contributors remained anonymous due to fear of retaliation.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) confirmed 17 presidential candidates, including President Samia Suluhu Hassan. Chadema (*Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo*, in English, Party for Democracy and Progress), the main opposition party, was disqualified from the elections for refusing to sign the Electoral Code of Conduct. ACT Wazalendo's presidential candidate, Luhaga Mpina, who had defected from the ruling *Chama Cha Mapinduzi* (CCM) party, was nominated by ACT-Wazalendo as their presidential candidate was also disqualified by INEC despite court rulings in his favour, paving way for minimal electoral challenge for the ruling party CCM candidate at the 2025 elections, with the two major contenders disqualified. The Registrar of Political Parties nullified Mpina's candidacy, citing internal party procedural violations, stating that Mpina had not been a member of ACT Wazalendo for a required 30-day minimum period and was nominated after the party's deadline.<sup>2</sup> The party claimed the rules had been updated.

A series of laws, including the Political Parties Affairs Laws (Amendment) Act, 2024, Cybercrimes Act, and Media Services Act, have been used to criminalize dissent, censor media, and control digital spaces. Media and digital censorship remained pervasive during the period as journalists and online content creators faced arrests, bans, and surveillance. A 24-year-old content creator disappeared while another one reported abduction and torture. Popular social media platforms that many Tanzanians rely on for information like JamiiForums and X were also restricted and will remain banned during the election period.

Enforced disappearances and killings have also been used by the state to silence its critics as numerous cases of abductions and extrajudicial killings of opposition figures and activists are documented, with little to no accountability. Activists and opposition members have also been subjected to torture, incommunicado detention, and politically motivated charges, including treason.

Freedom of movement and peaceful assembly has been repressed as authorities used arbitrary powers to block opposition leaders from traveling, banning political rallies, and violently dispersing peaceful gatherings including in places of worship.

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<sup>1</sup> Amnesty International, "*Tanzania: Lawfare: Repression by Law ahead of Tanzania's General Elections*," 20 October 2020, [www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr56/3051/2020/en/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr56/3051/2020/en/)

<sup>2</sup> ACT-Wazalendo 2015 Standing Rules.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This briefing is based on extensive documentation of human rights violations occurring in Tanzania between January 2024 and October 2025. The research methodology follows Amnesty International's standard procedures for human rights documentation, with particular attention to protecting the safety and confidentiality of sources. The information has been gathered through multiple sources, including victim testimonies, witness accounts, family members, legal representatives, civil society organizations, and media reports. All cases documented have been verified through multiple independent sources where available.

Amnesty International also carried out extensive desk research reviewing video footage, photographs, official statements and media reports. Further evidence was obtained from other official sources, including government websites, which provided additional context and corroboration for the findings.

On 6 October 2025, Amnesty International sent letters to the Attorney General of the United Republic of Tanzania requesting official responses to the specific concerns that we have investigated. At the time of publishing this briefing, the Attorney General had not responded to the right of reply.

In total, 43 individuals were interviewed during the course of the research. All interviewees gave consent to use their information. Where interviewees were concerned about reprisals, their names and other identifying information have been omitted to protect their identity and safety.

### 3. BACKGROUND

Following the death of President John Magufuli in March 2021, Samia Suluhu Hassan became Tanzania's first female president. Despite initial hopes for reform, the government has continued and intensified repressive practices targeting opposition leaders, civil society, journalists, and other dissenting voices.

On 13 June 2025, UN human rights experts called on Tanzania to immediately stop the enforced disappearance of political opponents, human rights defenders and journalists, as a tool of repression in the electoral context. The UN Experts list other human rights violations used as a tool for repression to include, "arbitrary arrests, harassment, torture, and the enforced disappearance of youth leaders, human rights defenders, and members of the political opposition."<sup>3</sup>

As Tanzania prepares for its 29 October 2025 general elections, the ruling party, *Chama Cha Mapinduzi* (CCM), in English, the Party of the Revolution, and Africa's second longest-ruling party, faces minimal electoral challenge. Under President Hassan, authorities have escalated a coordinated campaign to suppress political opposition and dissent. Tundu Lissu, Chairperson of Chadema (*Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo*, in English, Party for Democracy and Progress), the main opposition party, remains in custody facing treason charges for remarks made on 3 April 2025, urging his supporters to boycott the elections. His prosecution reflects the broader crackdown on dissent and the shrinking space for political participation.

On 12 April 2025, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) disqualified Chadema from participating in the elections after the party refused to sign the mandatory Electoral Code of Conduct citing unresolved concerns over electoral integrity. This disqualification extends to all elections until 2030.

Further undermining political pluralism, the Registrar of Political Parties annulled Chadema's secretariat appointments on 13 May 2025, stripping key leaders of their positions. Although the High Court overturned the decision on 28 August, the Registrar has refused to comply.

ACT-Wazalendo's presidential candidate, Luhaga Mpina, was also disqualified by INEC on 27 August, citing procedural irregularities. His disqualification follows his defection from the ruling CCM. The High Court ruled the disqualification unconstitutional on 11 September, affirming Mpina's right to a fair hearing. Nevertheless, INEC disqualified him again on 15 September following an objection by the Attorney General. The disqualification of Lissu and Mpina highlights growing concerns over the independence of Tanzania's electoral institutions ahead of a vote now lacking major opposition contenders.<sup>4</sup>

Tanzania's legal framework continues to enable repression. Authorities have weaponized laws including the Media Services Act, Electronic and Postal Communications Act, Political Parties Act, Cybercrimes Act, and Public Order Act to silence dissent, restrict freedoms, and entrench authoritarian control. These laws are vague, overly broad, and incompatible with international human rights standards.

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<sup>3</sup> The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Tanzania: UN Experts alarmed by pattern of enforced disappearance and torture to silence opposition and critics, 13 June 2025, [www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/06/tanzania-un-experts-alarmed-pattern-enforced-disappearance-and-torture](https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/06/tanzania-un-experts-alarmed-pattern-enforced-disappearance-and-torture)

<sup>4</sup> . The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), Tanzania - August 2025: Opposition presidential candidate barred ahead of October vote, August 2025, [www.idea.int/democracytracker/report/tanzania/august-2025](https://www.idea.int/democracytracker/report/tanzania/august-2025)



## 4. THE LEGAL CONTEXT

In the run up to the elections, authorities in Tanzania have passed laws and regulations that, while framed as administrative or protective reforms, collectively serve to constrain political opposition, suppress dissent, and expand state control over the right to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. The legislations, ranging from electoral reforms to digital surveillance laws, create bureaucratic hurdles, surveillance mechanisms, and discretionary enforcement powers that disproportionately affect opposition parties, civil society organizations (CSOs), and independent media. The disqualification of Chadema from the 2025 general elections for refusing to sign the Electoral Code of Conduct is emblematic of how these laws are being used to exclude dissenting voices from democratic processes. Below is a summary of some key legislative developments:

### 4.1 POLITICAL PARTIES AFFAIRS LAWS (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2024<sup>5</sup>

This legislation, assented on 7 March 2024, and published on March 22, 2024, introduces extensive new bureaucratic requirements for political parties, creating multiple opportunities for government interference in political party activities. The law, known as Act No. 3 of 2024, mandates that political parties maintain comprehensive documentation, including gender and social inclusion policies, financial management rules, procurement rules, and employment rules. While these requirements may appear administrative, they create room for selective enforcement against opposition parties and impose significant compliance burdens that can be used to justify deregistration or sanctions. Chadema was barred from conducting political activities following a court injunction. The amended law provides broad powers to the Registrar of Political Parties, enabling such restrictions based on allegations of internal disputes or violations. The law was cited in a lawsuit filed by Chadema trustees from Zanzibar, alleging discriminatory resource allocation and violations of party governance rules. The case led to a High Court injunction against Chadema's activities.<sup>6</sup>

### 4.2 INDEPENDENT NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION ACT, 2024<sup>7</sup>

This legislation was assented on 22 March 2024, and published on 10 July 2024, renamed the National Electoral Commission (NEC) to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), ostensibly to enhance independence. However, the legislation maintains presidential control over key appointments, allowing the President to directly appoint five of the ten commission members. This provision has been particularly criticized by the opposition who allege that it undermines genuine electoral independence ahead of the 2025 elections, and it forms the basis of Chadema's 'No Reforms, No Election' campaign.

On 26 August 2025, the Registrar of Political Parties, a presidential appointee, nullified Luhaga Mpina's nomination as *ACT-Wazalendo's* presidential candidate. The decision was based on alleged internal procedural violations, stating that Mpina had not been a party member for the required minimum of 30 days and was nominated after the party's official deadline.<sup>8</sup> *ACT-Wazalendo* contested this decision, arguing that its internal rules had been updated, and successfully challenged the nullification in the High Court in Dodoma. On 11 September, the court ruled that Mpina's disqualification was unconstitutional and ordered INEC to reinstate his candidacy and resume the nomination process. However, on 15 September, INEC refused to comply, citing new legal grounds

<sup>5</sup> The United Republic of Tanzania, *Political Parties Affairs Laws (Amendment) Act, 2024*, Act No. 3 of 2024, enacted March 7, 2024, published March 22, 2024. Available at: <https://tanzlii.org/akn/tz/act/2024/3>

<sup>6</sup> The Citizen, Zanzibar trustees sue Chadema over alleged discrimination, resource misallocation, 17 April 2025, [www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/court-news/zanzibar-trustees-sue-chadema-over-alleged-discrimination-resource-misallocation-5006136](http://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/court-news/zanzibar-trustees-sue-chadema-over-alleged-discrimination-resource-misallocation-5006136)

<sup>7</sup> The United Republic of Tanzania, *Independent National Electoral Commission Act, 2024*, published July 10, 2024. Available at: [oagmis.oag.go.tz/storage/index-attachments/parliamentary-acts/pwRFK7NjyHYUrqhl1EYia2LEPG73imjVv1yKYhj8.pdf](https://oagmis.oag.go.tz/storage/index-attachments/parliamentary-acts/pwRFK7NjyHYUrqhl1EYia2LEPG73imjVv1yKYhj8.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> ACT-Wazalendo 2015 Standing Rules.

provided by the Attorney General, which the commission claimed justified Mpina's continued disqualification.<sup>9</sup>

### 4.3 ELECTRONIC AND POSTAL COMMUNICATIONS (ONLINE CONTENT) AMENDMENT REGULATIONS, 2025

The Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) Amendment Regulations, 2025 that amended the Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) Regulations, 2020 were enacted on 28 January 2025. The amendments represent a continuation of the government's efforts to control digital communications and online content.<sup>10</sup> The amendments impose stricter compliance requirements on online content providers and expand regulatory oversight mechanisms, creating additional barriers to free expression and information sharing. The regulations work in conjunction with existing laws to create a comprehensive framework for digital censorship. They require online content providers to establish systems for identifying information sources, effectively eliminating anonymity for digital communications and creating mechanisms for surveillance and retaliation against critics.

On 27 May 2025, the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA), the government body that regulates telecommunications, broadcasting, internet, and postal services in Tanzania issued a directive to The Chanzo Initiative, an independent multimedia platform to take down a video covering a press event held by Josephat Gwajima, a CCM member of parliament (MP) known for challenging the party leadership and government policies. The video, published on The Chanzo Initiative's YouTube channel, featured Gwajima speaking about alleged abductions and disappearances in Tanzania.<sup>11</sup>

## 5. RIGHT TO LIFE AND SECURITY OF PERSON

**“Every human being shall be entitled to respect for his life and the integrity of his person.”<sup>12</sup>**

On 6 September 2024, Ali Mohammed Kibao, a 69-year-old senior strategist for Chadema was abducted from a bus in Dar es Salaam in the afternoon and remained missing for several hours before his body was discovered discarded near the shores of the Indian Ocean the next morning. Kibao had been brutally murdered, with his face disfigured with acid, indicating apparent torture.<sup>13</sup> Although President Hassan ordered<sup>14</sup> a prompt inquiry into Kibao's killing<sup>15</sup>, there has been no visible progress in the investigation. On 25 October 2024, Kibao's family complained that the Tanzania police did not show commitment to investigate the case, claiming that the family was sidelined<sup>16</sup>, with authorities failing to provide any information on the status of the investigation to them.<sup>17</sup>

Extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary killing is a grave violation of the right to life and bodily integrity guaranteed by Article 4 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (the African Charter).

<sup>9</sup> Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Decision on Objections to the Selection of Presidential Candidates for the United Republic of Tanzania, 15 September 2025, [www.inec.go.tz/news/uamuzi-wa-pingamizi-za-uteuzi-wa-wagombea-wa-kiti-cha-rais-kwa-jamhuri-ya-muungano-wa-tanzania](http://www.inec.go.tz/news/uamuzi-wa-pingamizi-za-uteuzi-wa-wagombea-wa-kiti-cha-rais-kwa-jamhuri-ya-muungano-wa-tanzania)

<sup>10</sup> The United Republic of Tanzania, *Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) (Amendment) Regulations, 2025*, Government Notice No. 57 of 2025, dated 28th January 2025. Available at: <https://www.tcra.go.tz/uploads/documents/sw-1738833320-Online%20Content%20Amendment%20Regulations,%202025%20GN%20No%2057%20of%2028%20January%202025.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> The Chanzo, *The Chanzo Yaondoa Maudhui ya Askofu Gwajima Kufuatia Wito wa TCRA*, 27 May 2025, [thechanzo.com/2025/05/27/the-chanzo-yaondoa-maudhui-ya-askofu-gwajima-kufuatia-wito-wa-tcra](https://thechanzo.com/2025/05/27/the-chanzo-yaondoa-maudhui-ya-askofu-gwajima-kufuatia-wito-wa-tcra)

<sup>12</sup> Article 4 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (the African Charter).

<sup>13</sup> The Chanzo, “Abducted Tanzanian Opposition Leader Found Dead, President Orders Investigation. Three Recently Abducted Opposition Leaders Remain Missing,” 8 September 2024, [thechanzo.com/2024/09/08/abducted-tanzanian-opposition-leader-found-dead-president-orders-investigation-three-recently-abducted-opposition-leaders-remain-missing](https://thechanzo.com/2024/09/08/abducted-tanzanian-opposition-leader-found-dead-president-orders-investigation-three-recently-abducted-opposition-leaders-remain-missing)

<sup>14</sup> BBC News, “Tanzania leader condemns killing of opposition figure doused in acid,” 9 September 2024, [bbc.com/news/articles/cqjlnewwdzvo](https://bbc.com/news/articles/cqjlnewwdzvo)

<sup>15</sup> Daily News, “President Samia orders the Police to end abduction cases,” [dailynews.co.tz/president-samia-orders-the-police-to-end-abduction-cases](https://dailynews.co.tz/president-samia-orders-the-police-to-end-abduction-cases)

<sup>16</sup> Statement by Ali Kibao's son expressing concern over the lack of progress in the investigation into his father's death. X (formerly Twitter), 25 October 2024, [x.com/AliKibao/status/1849742292258639924](https://x.com/AliKibao/status/1849742292258639924)

<sup>17</sup> Amnesty International telephone interview with Mohammed Ali Kibao, son of the slain opposition strategist Ali Mohammed Kibao, 20 September 2024.



On 1 May 2025, unknown assailants attacked catholic priest, Charles Kitima, Secretary General of the Tanzania Episcopal Conference, at the organization's premises in Kurasini ward, Dar es Salaam, hours after a recording of him criticising what he called "lawlessness" in the police force and emphasizing the need for electoral justice ahead of Tanzania's 2025 elections went viral on social media. According to the police report, the attack occurred around 10:15 PM, when Kitima went to use the canteen's washroom, after arriving there at around 7:00 PM. Kitima sustained severe injuries and had to be hospitalised for days.<sup>40</sup> On May 5, 2025, the Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance – Tanzania (CHRAGG) condemned the attack and urged police to investigate the incident and apprehend its perpetrators. Police said they were holding one person in connection to the incident, but there has been no update on the status of the investigation.

The practice of enforced disappearance violates multiple fundamental rights under international law, including Guidelines on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances in Africa, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (2010)<sup>18</sup>, and Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which establishes that "every human being has the inherent right to life," and Article 9, which provides that "everyone has the right to liberty and security of person."<sup>19</sup> The killing of Ali Mohammed Kibao presents a clear violation of Article 6 of the ICCPR. The documented circumstances of his abduction from a bus in Dar es Salaam, subsequent torture evidenced by acid disfigurement, and extrajudicial killing constitute several gross violations, including arbitrary deprivation of life.

The UN Human Rights Committee's General Comment No. 36 emphasizes that states must not only refrain from engaging in arbitrary killings but must also investigate such killings and bring perpetrators to justice. The African Charter also imposes on States a responsibility to prevent arbitrary deprivations of life caused by its own agents, and to protect individuals and groups from such deprivations at the hands of others, and further to investigate any killings that take place and hold the perpetrators accountable.<sup>20</sup> The documented lack of progress in the investigation, despite presidential orders, indicates a failure to meet this positive obligation.<sup>21</sup>

## 6. TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

**"Out of nowhere, a man who was wielding a long, pointed object jammed it through the inner ankle of my left leg, which left a gaping wound that was squirting blood. Through my bloodied eyes, I noticed that several of my captors were filming the ordeal, while laughing at and taunting us [the captives]."**<sup>22</sup>

On 23 June 2024 social media activist Edgar "Sativa" Mwakabela, was abducted at around 1:45 AM by individuals he identified as police officers in the Kimara Korogwe area on the Maji Chumvi road in Dar es Salaam. According to Mwakabela the police took him to Oyster Bay police station also in Dar es Salaam before blindfolding him and transporting him towards Arusha and dumping him in Katavi

<sup>18</sup> The International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (2010) compels States to fight enforced disappearance on their respective territories. It affirms the right of individuals to know the fate of their disappeared relatives, and to obtain justice and reparation.

<sup>19</sup> UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights," Articles 6 and 9, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>

<sup>20</sup> African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, 'General Comment 3 on the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights: The Right to Life (Article 4)' 18 November 2015, para 2.

<sup>21</sup> UN Human Rights Committee, "General Comment No. 36, Article 6 (Right to Life)," <https://docs.un.org/en/CCPR/C/GC/36>

<sup>22</sup> Amnesty International in-person interview with Pendo Jonas Kileo, 25 April 2025.



*Social media activist Edgar "Sativa" Mwakabela found at Katavi National Park © Mdude Nyagali*

National Park, western region of Tanzania. Sativa's abduction occurred during preparations for a strike by traders from Kariakoo, the main commercial area in Dar es Salaam, who were complaining about actions of officials from the Tanzania Revenue Authority, which Sativa was writing about on X.<sup>23</sup> Despite Sativa naming those involved in his kidnapping, transportation, reported torture, and abandonment in a forest with wild animals, including naming a Dar es Salaam Zonal Crime Officer<sup>24</sup>, no investigation has been conducted into the incident.<sup>25</sup> Sativa also reported that the police officers who took him to the forest shot him in the head.<sup>26</sup>

On 24 April 2025, police tried to prevent people from gathering at the Kisutu Resident Magistrate Court to observe the trial of Tundu Lissu who stood accused of criminal charges of treason and publication of false statements. Police arrested dozens of people outside the courthouse. Many detainees later reported being harassed, beaten, and subjected to treatment that may have amounted to torture or other ill treatment, before being abandoned in Ununio and Pande Forest, a game reserve approximately 43 kilometres from Dar es Salaam's city centre.<sup>27</sup> Police briefly held

the party's Secretary General, John Mnyika, before returning him to Chadema's Mikocheni headquarters in Dar es Salaam late that evening.<sup>28</sup> A woman and a man reported to Amnesty International that they had been sexually assaulted by the police.<sup>29</sup>

On 19 May 2025, security authorities arrested human rights activists, Agather Atuhaire, from Uganda, and Boniface Mwangi from Kenya, who had arrived in Tanzania on 18 May 2025 as part of a delegation to observe the trial of Lissu. After being arrested by immigration and police officers at the Serena Hotel in Dar es Salaam on 19 May 2025,<sup>30</sup> the two were driven to an unknown location, where they were held incommunicado and reported that they were beaten, tortured and stripped naked by people believed to be members of the Tanzanian military. On the day they were arrested, President Hassan had publicly warned foreign activists against interfering in Tanzanian affairs.<sup>31</sup> The two human rights defenders reported being subjected to unimaginable cruelty for four days. Boniface Mwangi was found abandoned at a border post between Kenya and Tanzania on 22 May while Agather Atuhaire was left at the border between Tanzania and Uganda on 23 May. They were both separately driven to the border posts and dumped. Medical reports and testimonies by the two show signs of torture.<sup>32</sup> In September 2025, during her presidential campaigns, President Hassan made remarks that could be

<sup>23</sup> Amnesty International in-person interview with Edgar 'Sativa' Mwakabela, October 2024.

<sup>24</sup> YouTube, "Sativa Amtuhumu Afande Mafwele Kuratibu Mpango wa Kutekwa Kwake," Published 28 June 2024, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=W5110U0hgQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W5110U0hgQ)

<sup>25</sup> The Chanzo, "Shocking Revelation: A 27-Year-Old Man Who Was Kidnapped, Shot in The Head, and Dumped in the Wild," 28 June 2024, [thechanzo.com/2024/06/28/shocking-revelation-a-27-year-old-man-who-was-kidnapped-shot-in-the-head-and-dumped-in-the-wild-says-he-was-first-detained-in-a-police-workshop-in-dar](https://thechanzo.com/2024/06/28/shocking-revelation-a-27-year-old-man-who-was-kidnapped-shot-in-the-head-and-dumped-in-the-wild-says-he-was-first-detained-in-a-police-workshop-in-dar)

<sup>26</sup> Medical reports on file with Amnesty International.

<sup>27</sup> Amnesty International in-person interview with 23 eyewitnesses and victims of police violations, 25 April 2025.

<sup>28</sup> Amnesty International in-person interview with Chadema Secretary General, John Mnyika, 25 April 2025.

<sup>29</sup> Amnesty International in-person interview with two victims of alleged police sexual violations, 25 April 2025.

<sup>30</sup> Amnesty International, Tanzania: Torture and forcible deportation of Kenyan and Ugandan activists must be urgently investigated, 23 May 2025, [www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/05/tanzania-torture-and-forcible-deportation-of-kenyan-and-ugandan-activists-must-be-urgently-investigated/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/05/tanzania-torture-and-forcible-deportation-of-kenyan-and-ugandan-activists-must-be-urgently-investigated/)

<sup>31</sup> WION, Tanzania's President Samia Suluhu Warns & Depots Kenyan Activists | World of Africa, 20 May 2025, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=BwPgQEM6-DO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BwPgQEM6-DO)

<sup>32</sup> "Msiruhusu watu wasio na adabu kutoka nchi nyingine kuvuka mipaka hapa." (unofficial translation from Kiswahili to English).

<sup>33</sup> Amnesty International telephone and in-person interviews with Agather Atuhaire and Boniface Mwangi in May and June 2025.

interpreted as a defense of Tanzanian authorities' actions against Atuhairi and Mwangi, saying, "do not allow ill-mannered individuals from other countries to cross the line here."<sup>33</sup> She further said that "authorities would deal decisively with foreigners..."<sup>34</sup>

The Police Force and Auxiliary Services Act (Chapter 322) grants broad powers to police officers but lacks adequate safeguards against abuse. Section 5 establishes the general duties of the Force for "preservation of the peace" and "apprehension and guarding of offenders" but provides insufficient procedural protections for arrest and detention.<sup>35</sup> The Act's failure to establish clear accountability mechanisms for police conduct creates an environment conducive to the documented violations.

The African Union's Guidelines and Measures for the Prohibition and Prevention of Torture, Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in Africa (The Robben Island Guidelines or RIG), elaborates on Article 5 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (the African Charter), which prohibits torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (ill-treatment).<sup>36</sup>

Although Tanzania has not ratified the UN Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT)<sup>37</sup>, the prohibition against torture is a peremptory norm of international law from which no derogation is permitted regardless of a state's treaty ratification status. Further, torture is prohibited in its Constitution (article 13(6) (e)) (United Republic of Tanzania, 1977).

## 7. ABDUCTIONS AND ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

According to the Guidelines on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances in Africa, enforced disappearance is a unique and integrated series of acts that represent a continuous violation of several fundamental rights enshrined in the African Charter, many of which are absolute and non-derogable. The list of rights breached, or potentially breached, by an enforced disappearance is not exhaustive. Even though the conduct breaches multiple rights, an enforced disappearance shall be considered a consolidated act and not a combination of acts. Among other violations, this crime infringes upon a wide range of civil and political rights, including the right to life; the right not to be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment or punishment; the right to liberty and security of the person; and the right to a fair trial and corresponding judicial guarantees.<sup>38</sup>

Tanzanian security forces have engaged in a systematic pattern of enforced disappearances targeting opposition supporters, civil society activists, and government critics. The wave of mysterious abductions, which are often followed by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or by concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the concerned person, has persisted despite public condemnations from President Hassan, who has explicitly denounced the disappearances and ordered security and defence forces to intervene and halt what she described as a "wave of terror" frightening the public across the country. The victims of disappearances and enforced disappearances are predominantly critics of the government or President Hassan often affiliated with the opposition, especially Chadema, or human rights activists. Many were targeted after voicing criticisms on social media, particularly on X (formerly Twitter).

**"Those who came to abduct me at Kimara Korogwe were three people - two men and one woman, by their appearance - the one who grabbed my neck was a tall person with a big body, somewhat big, with scars..."<sup>39</sup>**

<sup>39</sup> Amnesty International telephone interview with Edgar Mwakabela, September 2025.



Dioniz Kipanya © Dioniz Kipanya



Deusdedith Soka © Deusdedith Soka

On 26 July 2024, Dioniz Kipanya, a Chadema party official, went missing when he left home following a telephone conversation with an unidentified person.<sup>40</sup> He had not been found by the time this briefing was published.<sup>41</sup> On 18 August 2024, Deusdedith Soka and Jacob Mlay both Chadema youth activists, and Frank Mbise, a motorcycle taxi driver, were taken by a group of men in Temeke district, Dar es Salaam<sup>42</sup>. Soka was at the forefront of driving a movement for political change in Tanzania and disappeared just days after announcing his intention to lead nationwide youth protests to push for those changes.<sup>43</sup>

The Tanganyika Law Society (TLS) reported 83 cases of people going missing under mysterious circumstances as of August 9, 2024.<sup>44</sup> The Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance (CHREGG), the country's national human rights institution stated on 22 August 2024, that it was conducting special investigations into these incidents, but the public has not been informed whether these investigations have been completed or if the report will be made public.<sup>45</sup>

On 1 December 2024, Abdul Nondo, chairman of ACT Wazalendo's youth wing, reported that he was abducted at a bus stand in Dar es Salaam at 5 AM while returning from Kigoma. He was released 18 hours later after being dumped on the shores of Coco Beach in Dar es Salaam's Oyster Bay neighbourhood, having sustained injuries and he received treatment at the Aga Khan hospital in Dar es Salaam.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>34</sup> The Chanzo, Samia Asisitiza Suala la Amani, Asema Hakutakuwa na Vurugu Siku ya Kupiga Kura, 'Tumejipanga Vyema, 20 September 2025, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=awYtiHOUVAU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awYtiHOUVAU)

<sup>35</sup> Police Force and Auxiliary Services Act, Chapter 322, <https://tanzlii.org/akn/tz/act/1939/1/eng@2002-07-31>

<sup>36</sup> African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), Committee for the Prevention of Torture in Africa, 2004, [achpr.au.int/en/mechanisms/committee-prevention-torture-africa#:~:text=In%20October%202002%2C%20at%20its%2032nd%20Ordinary%20Session%2C,cruel%2C%20inhuman%20or%20degrading%20treatment%20or%20punishment%20%28ill-treatment%29.](https://achpr.au.int/en/mechanisms/committee-prevention-torture-africa#:~:text=In%20October%202002%2C%20at%20its%2032nd%20Ordinary%20Session%2C,cruel%2C%20inhuman%20or%20degrading%20treatment%20or%20punishment%20%28ill-treatment%29.)

<sup>37</sup> Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, [indicators.ohchr.org/](https://indicators.ohchr.org/)

<sup>38</sup> African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), Guidelines on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances in Africa, part 3: rights commonly infringed upon by an enforced disappearance

<sup>39</sup> Amnesty International telephone interview with Edgar Mwakabela, September 2025.

<sup>40</sup> Amnesty International, Tanzania: Stop repression of opposition leaders and immediately release Tundu Lissu, 11 April 2025, [www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/04/tanzania-stop-repression-of-opposition-leaders-and-immediately-release-tundu-lissu/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/04/tanzania-stop-repression-of-opposition-leaders-and-immediately-release-tundu-lissu/)

<sup>41</sup> Amnesty International, Tanzania: Stop repression of opposition leaders and immediately release Tundu Lissu, 11 April 2025, [www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/04/tanzania-stop-repression-of-opposition-leaders-and-immediately-release-tundu-lissu/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/04/tanzania-stop-repression-of-opposition-leaders-and-immediately-release-tundu-lissu/)

<sup>42</sup> Amnesty International, Tanzania: Stop repression of opposition leaders and immediately release Tundu Lissu, 11 April 2025, [www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/04/tanzania-stop-repression-of-opposition-leaders-and-immediately-release-tundu-lissu/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/04/tanzania-stop-repression-of-opposition-leaders-and-immediately-release-tundu-lissu/)

<sup>43</sup> The Chanzo, "One Year On: CHADEMA Honors Deusdedith Soka Amid Unsolved Disappearance," 18 August 2025, [thechanzo.com/2025/08/18/one-year-on-chadema-honors-deusdedith-soka-amid-unsolved-disappearance](https://thechanzo.com/2025/08/18/one-year-on-chadema-honors-deusdedith-soka-amid-unsolved-disappearance)

<sup>44</sup> Tanganyika Law Society, "Ongeziko la Vitendo vya Utekaji na Watu Nchini," 8 August 2024 (on file with Amnesty International).

<sup>45</sup> Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance (CHREGG)/THBUB, "THBUB Yatoa Tamko Kuhusu Kupotea Kwa Watu Nchini," 8 August 2024 (on file with Amnesty International).

<sup>46</sup> The Chanzo, "ACT Wazalendo Says Its Youth Wing Leader, Abdul Nondo, Has Been Abducted," 1 December 2024, [thechanzo.com/2024/12/01/act-wazalendo-says-its-youth-wing-leader-abdul-nondo-has-been-abducted/](https://thechanzo.com/2024/12/01/act-wazalendo-says-its-youth-wing-leader-abdul-nondo-has-been-abducted/)



On 23 March 2025, Daniel Chonchorio, a CCM member and Mwanza-based businessman, went missing and is yet to be found. Two party members participating in the internal CCM elections for parliamentary and councilor candidates have been reported missing under mysterious circumstances: Sinda Mseti, who was competing in councilor primaries for Sirari Ward, Tarime, vanished on 6 August 2025; and Siza Mwita Keheta, competing for Ganyange Ward, Tarime, went missing on 29 July 2025. Additionally, Anthony Gabriel, an acquaintance of one of the missing aspirants, was also reported missing.<sup>47</sup>

On 2 April 2025, *ACT-Wazalendo* reported the abduction of its member, Fakihi Ali Salim, a resident of Wete, North Pemba, who disappeared on 27 March 2025 at around 5:00 AM. He remains missing to date. According to his family, Salim's last known activity involved responding to a request from an unknown caller to procure a chicken. He was last seen entering a Harrier-model vehicle in Minyenyei village at 5:00 AM.<sup>48</sup>



*Mdude Nyagali © Mdude Nyagali*

On 2 May 2025, unknown assailants raided the home of Mdude Nyagali, a Chadema cadre and fierce critic of President Hassan's government and abducted him. The assailants severely beat him, leaving blood splattered across his home's veranda, before abducting him. Two police officers were alleged to be involved in the incident, with the police promising to investigate the allegations to ascertain the truth. However, the police later dismissed these allegations, stating that their officers were not involved in the incident.<sup>49</sup> Police Spokesperson David Misime issued a statement on 18 June 2025, absolving the law enforcement authority from any connection to the incident. He stated that inquiries into multiple alleged abduction cases had identified a disturbing pattern, concluding that many of the reported missing persons had fabricated their own disappearances.

On 6 October 2025, unknown assailants abducted a former Tanzanian ambassador to Cuba Humphrey Polepole. According to his family, they were alerted to a possible break-in the residence of the former diplomat and outspoken government critic. Upon arrival, they found the door broken, electrical wires cut off, and a significant amount of blood at the scene. Videos and images shared by the family appear to corroborate these claims, showing clear signs of a violent struggle.<sup>50</sup> Polepole's family reported the incident to Mbezi Police Station on the same day and his lawyer filed a habeas corpus application in court on 7 October 2025.<sup>51</sup> The police spokesperson David Misime stated that Polepole had been summoned to appear before the Directorate of Criminal Investigations (DCI) over allegations made on social media but had failed to comply.

The National Elections Act (Chapter 343) contains no specific provisions addressing the protection of political actors from enforced disappearance, despite the clear targeting of opposition figures documented in the cases of Kibao, Soka, Mlay, Mbise, and Nyagali.<sup>52</sup> This legislative gap undermines

<sup>47</sup> +Mwananchi, "Familia yaomba kinara kura za udiwani aliyetoweka Sirari arejeshwe," 8 August 2025, [mwananchi.co.tz/mw/habari/kitaifa/familia-yaomba-kinara-kura-za-udiwani-aliyetoweka-sirari-arejeshwe-5148184](https://mwananchi.co.tz/mw/habari/kitaifa/familia-yaomba-kinara-kura-za-udiwani-aliyetoweka-sirari-arejeshwe-5148184)

<sup>48</sup> The Chanzo, *ACT-Wazalendo Yadai Mwanachama Wake Kutekwa Pemba*, 2 April 2025, [thechanzo.com/2025/04/02/act-wazalendo-yadai-mwanachama-wake-kutekwa-pemba](https://thechanzo.com/2025/04/02/act-wazalendo-yadai-mwanachama-wake-kutekwa-pemba)

<sup>49</sup> The Chanzo, "One Year On: CHADEMA Honors Deusededith Soka Amid Unsolved Disappearance," 18 August 2025, [thechanzo.com/2025/08/18/one-year-on-chadema-honors-deusededith-soka-amid-unsolved-disappearance/](https://thechanzo.com/2025/08/18/one-year-on-chadema-honors-deusededith-soka-amid-unsolved-disappearance/)

<sup>50</sup> Amnesty International telephone interview with Augustino Polepole, brother to Humphrey Polepole on 7 October 2025.

<sup>51</sup> Amnesty International telephone interview with Peter Kibatala and Tito Magoti, lawyers of Humphrey Polepole on 7 October 2025.

<sup>52</sup> National Elections Act, Chapter 343, <https://tanzlii.org/akn/tz/act/1985/1/eng@2010-08-06>

the electoral process's integrity and violates Article 25 of the ICCPR, which guarantees the right to participate in public affairs.<sup>53</sup> Enforced disappearances represent serious violations of human rights, including the right to life, liberty and security of person protected under the international human rights law.

Beyond civil and political rights, enforced disappearance also affects economic, social, and cultural rights, such as the right to health, the right to family life, and the right to education, among others. In addition to human rights violations, enforced disappearance contravenes a range of customary and treaty rules of international human rights and humanitarian law (IHL), most notably the prohibitions against arbitrary deprivation of liberty, torture and other cruel or inhuman treatment, and murder, as outlined in the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Study on Customary International Humanitarian Law.<sup>54</sup> According to the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID), this crime is recognized as a continuous violation, reinforcing its gravity and the need for comprehensive legal and humanitarian responses.<sup>55</sup>

## 8. ARBITRARY DETENTION AND UNFAIR TRIALS

Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) prohibits arbitrary arrest or detention. The UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 35 further sets out several circumstances in which a person's detention may be unlawful. Accordingly, "arbitrary detention occurs when a state deprives an individual of their liberty without a legitimate legal basis or fails to follow due process of law." In such cases, the detention lacks justification under national or international legal standards and is therefore considered arbitrary.<sup>56</sup>

After a person has been detained, they have a right to access lawyers and family members. Those denied this access are being subjected to incommunicado detention. In some cases, as well as being denied contact with the outside world, prisoners or detainees are held in locations known only to the authorities – this is known as secret detention and may amount to enforced disappearance.<sup>57</sup>

On 9 April 2025, police arrested Tundu Lissu 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 unnecessary and excessive force, including by firing teargas and shooting in the air to disperse his supporters who gathered around during the arrest.<sup>58</sup>

**"The Kisutu [in Dar es Salaam] Court had no jurisdiction. I should have been charged in Mbinga, where I was arrested. This is against the law. I am being detained without any legal basis."**<sup>59</sup>

On 10 April 2025, police charged him with the non-bailable offence of treason, in relation to statements he made during a press conference on 4 April 2025 in Dar es Salaam, while addressing Chadema's prospective parliamentary and council candidates. The specific words that form the basis of the charge are: "They have said one thing correctly there, they say this stance signifies rebellion, it

<sup>53</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 25, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>

<sup>54</sup> Jean-Marie Henckaerts and Louise Doswald-Beck, Customary International Humanitarian Law, Volume I: Rules, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Cambridge University Press, 2005.

<sup>55</sup> Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance (WGEID), General Comment on Enforced Disappearance as a Continuous Crime, A/HRC/16/48 (26 January 2011), para. 39.

<sup>56</sup> United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Fact Sheet No. 26 (Rev. 1): Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, 14 February 2024, [www.ohchr.org/en/publications/fact-sheets/fact-sheet-no-26-rev-1-working-group-arbitrary-detention](https://www.ohchr.org/en/publications/fact-sheets/fact-sheet-no-26-rev-1-working-group-arbitrary-detention)

<sup>57</sup> UN Human Rights Committee (HRC), General Comment No. 35, Article 9 (Liberty and Security of Person), CCPR/C/GC/35, 16 December 2014.

<sup>58</sup> Amnesty International, Tanzania: Stop repression of opposition leaders and immediately release Tundu Lissu, 11 April 2025, [www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/04/tanzania-stop-repression-of-opposition-leaders-and-immediately-release-tundu-lissu/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/04/tanzania-stop-repression-of-opposition-leaders-and-immediately-release-tundu-lissu/)

<sup>59</sup> Tundu Lissu in court on 11 September 2025, Unofficial Kiswahili to English translation of, "Mahakama ya Kisutu haikuwa na mamlaka yoyote. Nilipaswa kushtakiwa Mbinga, ambako nilikamatwa. Hii ni kinyume na sheria. Nimewekwa kizuizini bila msingi wa kisheria."



is true. Because we are saying we are blocking the election, we will incite rebellion, that is the way to bring about change, that is the way to bring about change.”<sup>60</sup> Lissu called on Tanzanians to boycott the forthcoming elections, citing the possibility of rigging.<sup>61</sup> The state also charged him with three offences in relation to the “publication of false information” using the country’s cybercrime laws. On 3 April 2025, Tundu Lissu, in a YouTube post also stated that Tanzanian police participated in alleged electoral malpractices that he claimed were ordered by the president following the November 2024 local elections. He further stated that judges in the country are not independent and subject to pressure of the ruling party.<sup>62</sup>



*Tundu Lissu at the High Court of Tanzania in Dar Es Salaam, August 2025 © CHADEMA*

Since his arrest, Lissu has remained in custody because his treason charge is not eligible for bail. Lissu was granted permission on 23 June 2025 to represent himself in his treason trial after being denied the right to meet his lawyers in private by prison authorities.<sup>63</sup>

On 23 July 2025, security authorities in Tanzania abducted a Kenyan human rights activist Mwabili Mwagodi in Tanzania. Mwagodi, known for his outspoken criticism of political influence in religious institutions and his mobilization of youth movements in Kenya, was last seen in Dar es Salaam where he worked for a hospitality company. Eyewitnesses confirmed he was taken away by unknown persons

<sup>60</sup> Unofficial Kiswahili to English translation of, “Wamesema kitu kimoja sahihi hapo, wanasema msimamo huu unaashiria uasi, ni kweli. Kwa sababu tunasema tunazuia uchaguzi, tutahamasisha uasi, hiyo ndiyo namna ya kupata mabadiliko, ndiyo namna ya kupata mabadiliko. Mandela had to go through life in prison for treason ili kupata mabadiliko Afrika Kusini. Kwahiyo tunaenda kukinukisha, walio tayari tutakwenda nao, hakuna mtu atawekewa bunduki kwenda... kama unataka kuwa mbunge seriously twende tukapiganie mabadiliko... huuu uchaguzi tutauvuruga, kama ulikuwa unafikiria kuwa Mbunge Oktoba au Novemba saha... mimi nimekinukisha, ninakamatwa... ninakwenda kushitakiwa kwa uhaini kwa kuhamasisha uasi.”

<sup>61</sup> Amnesty International, Tanzania: Stop repression of opposition leaders and immediately release Tundu Lissu, 11 April 2025, [www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/04/tanzania-stop-repression-of-opposition-leaders-and-immediately-release-tundu-lissu/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/04/tanzania-stop-repression-of-opposition-leaders-and-immediately-release-tundu-lissu/)

<sup>62</sup> Amnesty International, Tanzania: Stop repression of opposition leaders and immediately release Tundu Lissu, 11 April 2025, [www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/04/tanzania-stop-repression-of-opposition-leaders-and-immediately-release-tundu-lissu/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/04/tanzania-stop-repression-of-opposition-leaders-and-immediately-release-tundu-lissu/)

<sup>63</sup> Amnesty International telephone interview with four lawyers representing Tundu Lissu, September 2025.

on a motorbike.<sup>64</sup> Mwagodi was dropped in a bush in Kinondo, Kwale county, on the Kenyan coast around 3:00 am on 27 July 2025, where he walked for about three kilometres to a Diani police station where he sought help, including medical help. According to Mwagodi, Tanzanian authorities took his phone, laptop, and questioned him about protests and political interests.<sup>65</sup>

## 9. VIOLATIONS OF THE RIGHT TO PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

**“Every individual shall have the right to assemble freely with others. [...]”<sup>66</sup>**

Tanzanian authorities have systematically banned, disrupted, or violently dispersed peaceful gatherings, particularly those organized by opposition parties.

On 21 July 2024, the police arrested opposition leader Freeman Mbowe and 11 other Chadema party officials and staff members at a hotel in Mwanza, northwestern Tanzania. They were arrested hours before a planned conference, in which party members would discuss demanding a new Constitution for the country. Although seven of them were released days after their arrest, Mbowe was only released more than seven months later, after the Director of Public Prosecution dropped terrorism charges against him and three others.<sup>67</sup>

On 11 August 2024, Tanzanian police arrested and detained leading figures from Chadema including Tundu Lissu, John Mnyika, Nyasa regional leader, Joseph Mbilinyi, leaders of the party’s youth wing, Baraza la Vijana Cha Chadema (Bavicha) and more than a hundred youth supporters, as well as five journalists for violating a ban on holding a youth conference. They were arrested during a meeting at Chadema’s Nyasa zonal office in Mbeya, southwest Tanzania, ahead of International

Youth Day on 12 August 2024.<sup>68</sup> According to a party official, the leading figures were taken by police to unknown locations, while other party members and journalists were transported to various police stations in Mbeya. The police later, on 12 August 2024, arrested then Chadema party chairman

<sup>64</sup> 26 July 2025, [www.amnestykenya.org/amnesty-international-statement-on-the-reported-abduction-of-kenyan-activist-mwabili-mwagodi/](https://www.amnestykenya.org/amnesty-international-statement-on-the-reported-abduction-of-kenyan-activist-mwabili-mwagodi/)

<sup>65</sup> Amnesty International telephone interview with three eyewitnesses who saw Mwagodi in Diani, including his sister, human rights activists, and Mwagodi himself, July 2025.

<sup>66</sup> Article 11 of the African Charter

<sup>67</sup> Amnesty International, Tanzania: End mass arrests and arbitrary detentions of political opposition, 12 August 2024, [www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/08/tanzania-end-mass-arrests-and-arbitrary-detentions-of-political-opposition/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/08/tanzania-end-mass-arrests-and-arbitrary-detentions-of-political-opposition/)

<sup>68</sup> Amnesty International, Tanzania: End mass arrests and arbitrary detentions of political opposition, 12 August 2024, [www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/08/tanzania-end-mass-arrests-and-arbitrary-detentions-of-political-opposition/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/08/tanzania-end-mass-arrests-and-arbitrary-detentions-of-political-opposition/)



*The arrest of several party leaders, including John Heche, the Vice Chairman of Chadema in Dar Es Salaam, 23 August 2025 © CHADEMA*

Freeman Mbowe and the Bavicha national leader John Pambalu at Songwe airport after they arrived from Dar es Salaam to follow up about other party leaders and members who had been arrested.<sup>69</sup>

On 23 April 2025, police in Dar es Salaam arrested several party leaders, including John Heche, the Vice Chairman of Chadema (Mainland Tanzania), to prevent a public rally which the party planned to hold in the Kariakoo area. In their letter dated 22 April 2025, police said they were prohibiting the meeting to avoid disrupting business activities in Dar es Salaam's main market area.<sup>70</sup> The next day, on 24 April 2025, police beat up and arrested people gathering at the Kisutu Resident Magistrate Court to observe a court case against Lissu.<sup>71</sup>

**“As we approached the court, I noticed an unusual police deployment including armoured vehicles stationed around the entrance. Even at the court premise, there were police men, members of the Field Force Unit and they stopped us from getting access to the courtroom. So, we decided to stand outside and watch from there as we considered our options.”<sup>72</sup>**

On 2 June 2025, the Ministry of Home Affairs through a letter revoked the license of Glory of Christ Tanzania Church, led by government critic Bishop Josephat Gwajima who also serves as Kawe MP for ruling party, CCM.<sup>73</sup> In the letter to Gwajima from the Registrar of Civil Societies, the authority claimed that the church had breached the law by mixing politics with religion, stating that his sermons had “incited the public against the state” and “threatened peace and stability” against sections 17 and 39 of the Civil Societies Act.<sup>74</sup>

Gwajima had publicly demanded authorities take action to stop incidents of enforced disappearance of government critics, placing blame on President Hassan. Glory of Christ Tanzania Church members have had difficulty assembling for worship purposes, with police dispersing them violently every Sunday when the congregation meets, sometimes using water cannons.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Amnesty International, Tanzania: End mass arrests and arbitrary detentions of political opposition, 12 August 2024, [www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/08/tanzania-end-mass-arrests-and-arbitrary-detentions-of-political-opposition/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/08/tanzania-end-mass-arrests-and-arbitrary-detentions-of-political-opposition/)

<sup>70</sup> Tanzania Police Force, letter to CHADEMA prohibiting rally at Kariakoo, 22 April 2025, (on file with Amnesty International).

<sup>71</sup> Amnesty International interviews, Dar es Salaam, 25 April 2025. Telephone and in-person interviews conducted with Chadema party officials and 23 party members who were arrested by police on 24 April and later released.

<sup>72</sup> Amnesty International telephone and one on one interviews with Chadema party official in Dar es Salaam, 25 April 2025.

<sup>73</sup> Government of Tanzania, statement on Instagram, 24 September 2025, [www.instagram.com/p/DKZqQkMPxt1/](https://www.instagram.com/p/DKZqQkMPxt1/)

<sup>74</sup> Letter from the Registrar of Civil Societies, Emmanuel Kihampa dated 2 June 2025 (on file with Amnesty International).

<sup>75</sup> Josephat Gwajima, statement on YouTube, 23 September 2025, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=NhpB9Zh2\\_6Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NhpB9Zh2_6Y)

On 10 June 2025, the High Court in Dar es Salaam issued an injunction prohibiting Chadema from conducting any political activities. The order was based on a lawsuit alleging discrimination in how the party allocates resources between mainland Tanzania and the semi-autonomous islands of Zanzibar.<sup>76</sup> This injunction has adversely impacted the right of peaceful assembly for many Chadema members and supporters across the country.

On 8 September 2025, dozens of Chadema supporters were detained in police custody for holding what police described as "illegal assemblies." On 7 September 2025, police prevented members and supporters from gathering to commemorate "*Mashujaa Day*" (Heroes Day), an event Chadema organised to honour those who died fighting for democracy in Tanzania. In Serengeti, Mara region, police arrested several high-ranking Chadema officials while they were cleaning the grave of Bob Makani, one of the party's founders, and visiting his family. On the same day, in Mwanza, in north-western Tanzania, police arrested over 20 people gathered at a church to commemorate *Mashujaa Day*.<sup>77</sup> Amnesty International confirmed in an interview with the party's spokesperson that no charges were pressed against any of them. In Dar es Salaam, police surrounded the offices of the Tanganyika Law Society to block access for a similar planned *Mashujaa Day* commemoration.<sup>78</sup>

The Public Order Act, referenced in the police actions against Chadema rallies, grants broad discretionary powers to police to restrict assemblies but lacks adequate procedural safeguards.<sup>79</sup> Section 5 of the Public Order Act criminalizes behavior that is "threatening, abusive, or insulting, and either intended to provoke a breach of the peace or likely to do so." In practice, authorities have applied this provision subjectively—particularly in interpreting terms like "threatening" or "likely to provoke"—which gives police broad discretion to intervene in public gatherings.

Together with the Political Parties Act (Chapter 258) 2019, which establishes the framework for political party operations, the two laws contain provisions that have been used to restrict legitimate political activities. The Political Parties Act's broad language regarding activities that threaten "national unity" or "public order" provides insufficient guidance for consistent application and creates opportunities for discriminatory enforcement.<sup>80</sup>

The Police Force and Auxiliary Services Act require organizers to notify police 48 hours in advance of any public assembly. Police may deny permission if the gathering is deemed likely to breach peace or public order.<sup>81</sup>

Article 11 of the African Charter protects "the right to assemble freely with others. The exercise of this right shall be subject only to necessary restrictions provided for by law, in particular those enacted in the interest of national security, the safety, health, ethics and rights and freedoms of others."<sup>82</sup> In May 2017, the African Commission developed, the Guidelines on Freedom of Association and Assembly of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. The guidelines provide how states must establish a clear and explicit legal basis for the right to freedom of peaceful assembly that should be recognised in states' constitutions and/or legislation.<sup>83</sup>

The systematic restrictions on peaceful assembly violate Article 21 of the ICCPR and Art. 20 of the UDHR which provides that "the right of peaceful assembly shall be recognized."<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> High Court of Tanzania, *Attorney General v. CHADEMA*, Miscellaneous Civil Application No. 2987 of 2025, 10 June 2025 (on file with Amnesty International).

<sup>77</sup> Chadema, statement on X, 25 September 2025, [x.com/ChademaTZ2/status/1964641556369215673](https://x.com/ChademaTZ2/status/1964641556369215673)

<sup>78</sup> Amnesty International telephone interview with Amani Golugwa, September 2025.

<sup>79</sup> Public Order Act, referenced in police actions against CHADEMA rallies

<sup>80</sup> Political Parties Act, Chapter 258, <https://tanzlii.org/akn/tz/act/1992/5/eng@2019-11-30>

<sup>81</sup> Section 43 of the Police Force and Auxiliary Services Act (Chapter 322).

<sup>82</sup> Article 11 of the African Charter.

<sup>83</sup> Amnesty International, Guidelines on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly 27 November 2024, [www.amnesty.org/en/documents/act30/8426/2024/en/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/act30/8426/2024/en/)

<sup>84</sup> UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights," Article 21, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>



## 10. ATTACKS ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND THE MEDIA

**“We have started seeing a trend where activists from our region are beginning to invade and interfere in our affairs. If they’ve already been dealt with in their own countries, they should not come here to ruin things for us. Let’s not give them room ...”<sup>85</sup>**

Police arrested and detained opposition politicians for statements they made on public platforms, particularly those concerning President Hassan. Freedom of information and the ability of the public to express their views freely have come under severe attack as Tanzania approaches its general elections, threatening to undermine the public's capacity to access information needed to effectively participate in the electoral processes.

On 4 July 2024, Rungwe Primary Court, Mbeya, southwest Tanzania sentenced 24-year-old Shadrack Chaula, a painter and TikTok user to two years imprisonment or a fine of five million Tanzanian shillings (about 2,000 USD) for spreading false information contrary to section 16 of the Cybercrimes Act, 2015. Police said Chaula used “strong words” against the president in a video he posted on his TikTok account on 30 June 2024 showing himself burning a picture of President Hassan while verbally insulting her. Supporters crowd-funded the fine, securing his release. However, on 2 August 2024, he was reportedly abducted by unknown individuals and has not been seen since. In a letter dated 8 August 2024 to the media, Mbeya Regional Police Commander, Benjamin Kuzaga, acknowledged the incident and promised to investigate<sup>86</sup>, but no official findings have been made public.

The Cybercrimes Act, 2015 (Act 14 of 2015) criminalizes various forms of online expression through vaguely defined offenses such as “false information” and content that may “cause fear and alarm.”<sup>87</sup> These provisions fail to meet the requirements of legality, necessity, and proportionality under Article 19(3) of the ICCPR.

On 2 October 2024, TCRA suspended the online content licenses for three Mwananchi Communication Limited brands: The Citizen, Mwananchi Digital, and Mwanaspoti for 30 days following the release of a viral animated clip by The Citizen. Many media outlets have also faced orders from TCRA to take down certain content they have published on their platforms, which is perceived to contradict the government's position and narrative, creating fear among journalists and editors.<sup>88</sup>

On 18 June 2025 police in Dar es Salaam detained Janeth Rithe, Chairperson of ACT Wazalendo's Women's Wing, for four days after she responded to a police summons. Police summoned Rithe for questioning regarding a statement she made on June 18, 2025, at a public rally in Manzese, Dar es

<sup>85</sup> Citizen TV, Tanzanian President Samia Suluhu warns foreign activists to stay away, 19 May 2025, [www.bing.com/videos/riverview/relatedvideo?q=Samia%20Suluhu%20September%202025%20akisema%20aliwadhabit%20wageni&mid=4CC82223F880C37CF8324CC82223F880C37CF832&ajaxhist=0](https://www.bing.com/videos/riverview/relatedvideo?q=Samia%20Suluhu%20September%202025%20akisema%20aliwadhabit%20wageni&mid=4CC82223F880C37CF8324CC82223F880C37CF832&ajaxhist=0)

“Tumeanza kuona mtindo wa wanaharakati kutoka ukanda wetu kuja kuingilia mambo yetu. Kama tayari wamekwishaadhibiwa kwao, wasije hapa kutuharibia. Tusitoe nafasi—tayari wameleta vurugu kwao ...” (unofficial translation from Kiswahili to English).

<sup>86</sup> Media Wire Express, Mbeya Police Probe Missing Accused Photo Burner, 9 August 2024, [mediawireexpress.co.tz/mbeya-police-probe-missing-accused-photo-burner/](https://mediawireexpress.co.tz/mbeya-police-probe-missing-accused-photo-burner/).

<sup>87</sup> The Cybercrimes Act, 2015, Act 14 of 2015, <https://tanzlii.org/akn/tz/act/2015/14/eng@2015-05-22>

<sup>88</sup> The Chanzo, “The Chanzo Yaondoa Maudhui ya Askofu Gwajima Kufuatia Wito wa TCRA,” 27 May 2025,

Salaam, where she expressed astonishment at President Hassan's claim that Tanzania was performing better economically than the United States.<sup>89</sup>

On 6 September 2025, the TCRA imposed a 90-day ban on JamiiForums, a prominent online platform, citing the publication of misleading and defamatory content about the government and the President. The alleged violations were said to contravene the 2020 Online Content Regulations and its 2022 and 2025 amendments.<sup>90</sup> TCRA stated that on 4 September 2025, JamiiForums published misleading, defamatory, and demeaning content about the Government and the President through its platform and social media accounts.<sup>91</sup> The JamiiForums ban came following the criminal case facing the owners of the YouTube channel Wachokonozi, Jackson Kabalo and Joseph Mrindoko, who face charges of publishing false information contrary to Section 16 of the Cybercrime Act of 2015, and publishing online content without a license, in violation of Section 116(3)(b) of the Electronic and Postal Communications Act.<sup>92</sup>

The Electronic and Postal Communications Act (Chapter 306) and its 2018 Online Content Regulations require registration and licensing of online content creators, creating barriers to expression that are incompatible with international standards.<sup>93</sup> The regulations' broad liability provisions for user-generated content create incentives for over-censorship.

Ordinary members of the public have also been targeted under the pretext of combating misinformation. The Media Services Act (Chapter 229) establishes a licensing regime for journalists and grants broad powers to the Minister to prohibit content deemed against "public interest" or "national security."<sup>94</sup> These provisions violate the principle of legality under Article 19(3) of the ICCPR due to their vague and overbroad nature.

On 6 August 2025, Home Affairs Minister Innocent Bashungwa ordered police to conduct "online patrols,"<sup>95</sup> claiming the measure would monitor individuals allegedly using digital platforms to disrupt peace and security in Tanzania while combating cybercrime.

The government has intensified efforts to censor social media networks as the general election approaches. Authorities have already restricted access to X, a platform popular among Tanzanians for uncensored news and political discussion. Users of other online platforms such as Telegram and Clubhouse have also reported difficulties accessing these networks, with many stating they must use a VPN to participate in discussions.

**"By March 31, 2025, TCRA had identified and shut down a total of 80,171 websites, social media accounts, platforms, and blogs that were publishing content deemed unethical and harmful to children's mental health."<sup>96</sup>**

On 5 May 2025, deputy Minister of Information, Culture, Arts, and Sports told parliament that TCRA had identified and closed 80,171 platforms for "publishing unethical content that poses a risk to children's mental health."<sup>97</sup> According to NetBlocks, a global internet monitor working at the intersection of digital rights, cybersecurity and internet governance, on 20 May 2025 live metrics showed that X was unreachable on major internet providers in Tanzania. The incident followed posts

<sup>89</sup> Mwanahalisi Online, "ACT Wazalendo hawajui hatma ya Janeth Rithe," 21 June 2025, [mwanahalisonline.com/2025/06/21/act-wazalendo-hawajui-hatma-ya-janeth-rithe/](https://mwanahalisonline.com/2025/06/21/act-wazalendo-hawajui-hatma-ya-janeth-rithe/)

<sup>90</sup> Amnesty International telephone interview with Maxence Melo, the Executive Director of Jamii Forums, September 2025.

<sup>91</sup> TCRA, statement on Instagram, 25 September 2025 (on file with Amnesty International).

<sup>92</sup> The Chanzo, "Criminal Case Against YouTubers 'Wachokonozi' Postponed," 14 August 2025, [thechanzo.com/2025/08/14/criminal-case-against-youtubers-wachokonozi-postponed/](https://thechanzo.com/2025/08/14/criminal-case-against-youtubers-wachokonozi-postponed/)

<sup>93</sup> The Electronic and Postal Communications Act, Chapter 306, <https://tanzlii.org/akn/tz/act/2010/3/eng@2010-05-07>

<sup>94</sup> Media Services Act, Chapter 229, <https://tanzlii.org/akn/tz/act/2016/12/eng@2016-11-18>

<sup>95</sup> Ministry of Home Affairs, Bashungwa Amuagiza IGP kudhibiti wahalifu wanaotumia mitandao kuvuruga amani, 11 August 2025, [moha.go.tz/index.php/News/QK9b68neEv](https://moha.go.tz/index.php/News/QK9b68neEv)

<sup>96</sup> The Chanzo, TCRA Yafungia Zaidi ya Mitandao ya Kijamii 80,000 Yenye Maudhui Hatarishi kwa Watoto, 5 May 2025, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUgOCYJrAqU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUgOCYJrAqU)

<sup>97</sup> The Chanzo, TCRA Yafungia Zaidi ya Mitandao ya Kijamii 80,000 Yenye Maudhui Hatarishi kwa Watoto, 5 May 2025, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUgOCYJrAqU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUgOCYJrAqU)



by a compromised police X account claiming that President Hassan had died<sup>98</sup>. At the time of publishing this briefing, users could only access X through VPNs.<sup>99</sup>

Article 9 of the African Charter guarantees individuals the right to receive information as well as the right to express and disseminate information. In November 2019, the African Commission adopted the Declaration of Principles of Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa to replace the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa which the African Commission had adopted in 2002. The 2019 Declaration consolidates developments on freedom of expression and access to information guided by standards drawn from African and international human rights instruments and African judicial bodies.<sup>100</sup>

The attacks on freedom of expression and media freedom violate Articles 19 of the ICCPR and UDHR which guarantee freedom of expression, including "freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds."<sup>101</sup>

## 11. RESTRICTIONS ON FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

Opposition leaders and activists have faced severe restrictions on their freedom of movement that have effectively prevented them from conducting normal political activities.

On 29 January 2024, Mdude Nyagali reported that authorities at the Tanzania-Kenya Namanga border prevented him from leaving the country for Kenya after informing him that he needed a special permit from law enforcement organs before leaving Tanzania.<sup>102</sup>

On 13 May 2025, Chadema deputy secretary general Amani Golugwa was arrested at Julius Nyerere International Airport as he was preparing to travel to Brussels via Turkish Airlines to attend the International Democracy Union Forum.<sup>103</sup> Police claimed they were acting on intelligence reports that Golugwa had "developed a habit of exiting and entering the country without following established procedures."<sup>104</sup> According to Golugwa, the police claimed that he had been sending information outside the country to, among other institutions, the European parliament. They further claimed that Golugwa had been sharing with foreigners' information that dishonors the country, which had led to the European Parliament issuing some sanctions against the country.<sup>105</sup>

**"They questioned me about allegedly sending information outside the country, specifically to individuals in the European Parliament. They claimed that the information I shared dishonoured the country and may have contributed to the European Parliament issuing sanctions against Tanzania."**<sup>106</sup>

On June 6, 2025, senior Chadema official Godbless Lema was stopped at the Namanga border by immigration officers and detained for about four hours while en route to Nairobi, Kenya. According to information he shared with Amnesty International, he was going to Nairobi to check on his health.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>98</sup> NetBlocks, 20 May 2025, [mastodon.social/@netblocks/114541588493655020](https://mastodon.social/@netblocks/114541588493655020)

<sup>99</sup> Amnesty International in-person interview with four Tanzanians, 30 September 2025.

<sup>100</sup> African Commission, Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression 2019.

<sup>101</sup> UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights," Article 19, [www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights](https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights)

<sup>102</sup> Mdude Nyagali, statement on X, 24 January 2024, [x.com/mdudeniyagali/status/1751858280790417671?s=20](https://x.com/mdudeniyagali/status/1751858280790417671?s=20)

<sup>103</sup> The Chanzo, "CHADEMA Deputy Secretary Amani Golugwa Arrested at Airport While Heading to IDU Forum in Brussels," 13 May 2025, [thechanzo.com/2025/05/13/chadema-deputy-secretary-amani-golugwa-arrested-at-airport-while-heading-to-idu-forum-in-brussels/](https://thechanzo.com/2025/05/13/chadema-deputy-secretary-amani-golugwa-arrested-at-airport-while-heading-to-idu-forum-in-brussels/)

<sup>104</sup> Amnesty International telephone interview with Edgar Mwakabala, May 2025.

<sup>105</sup> Amnesty International telephone interview with Amani Golugwa, September 2025.

<sup>106</sup> Amnesty International telephone interview with Amani Golugwa, September 2025.

<sup>107</sup> Godbless Lema, statement on X, 24 September 2025, [x.com/godbless\\_lemas/status/1930979938804363683](https://x.com/godbless_lemas/status/1930979938804363683)

His passport was confiscated, and he was detained for hours before being released and instructed to report to Immigration Headquarters in Dodoma for further clarification. The Immigration Department described the action as "normal," usually undertaken when the authority has been provided with information demanding the person in question to be interrogated.<sup>108</sup>

On 12 July 2025, two senior Chadema officials, Brenda Rupia and Leonard Joseph Magere, were prevented from travelling to neighbouring Kenya at the Namanga border after being arrested by police. Police confirmed arresting Rupia, claiming it related to an investigation as she had allegedly published false information on social media.<sup>109</sup>

The Tanzania Immigration Act, 1995 and related regulations provide broad discretionary powers to immigration officials and lack the precision required under international law for restrictions on fundamental rights. The documented practice requiring "special permits from law enforcement organs" for opposition members to travel, as experienced by Nyagali, has no clear statutory basis and violates the principle of legality.<sup>110</sup>

The restrictions on freedom of movement violate Article 12 of the ICCPR, which establishes that "everyone lawfully within the territory of a State shall, within that territory, have the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose his residence" and that "everyone shall be free to leave any country, including his own."<sup>111</sup> The documented restrictions lack the legal basis, necessity and proportionality required under international law.

Article 12(1) of the African Charter provides that every individual has the right to move freely and live anywhere within their own country, as long as they follow the law. They also have the right to leave any country, including their own, and to return to it.<sup>112</sup> In 2019, the African Commission adopted General Comment No 5 on the African Charter. In this general comment, the commission elaborated on the right to freedom of movement and residence within state borders.<sup>113</sup>

## **11.1 DISREGARDING REGIONAL TREATY-BASED MOVEMENT FREEDOMS**

Article 104 of the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community highlights the EACs commitment to making it easier for people, workers, and services to move freely across member states. It supports the rights of citizens to live, work, and set up businesses anywhere within the region.<sup>114</sup>

On May 18 and 19, 2025, Tanzanian immigration authorities denied entry to six prominent Kenyan legal and human rights advocates, including former Justice Minister Martha Karua and former Chief Justice Willy Mutunga, who had traveled to Dar es Salaam to observe the treason trial of opposition leader Tundu Lissu.

The deportations contravened Tanzania's obligations under the East African Community (EAC) Treaty and the Common Market Protocol, which guarantee free movement among member states. The group included Martha Karua, a former justice minister of Kenya; Willy Mutunga, former Chief Justice of

<sup>108</sup> Tanzania Immigration Department, statement on Instagram, 25 September 2025.

<sup>109</sup> Tanzania Police, statement via Gazeti Jamvi on Facebook, 25 September 2025, [www.facebook.com/gazetijamvi/posts/baada-ya-chama-cha-demokrasia-na-maendeleo-chadema-kuandika-barua-ya-kudai-mwana/1306699944144645/](https://www.facebook.com/gazetijamvi/posts/baada-ya-chama-cha-demokrasia-na-maendeleo-chadema-kuandika-barua-ya-kudai-mwana/1306699944144645/)

<sup>110</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 12, [www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights](https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights)

<sup>111</sup> UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights," Article 12, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>

<sup>112</sup> Article 12(1) of the African Charter.

<sup>113</sup> African Commission's General Comment on the Right to Freedom of Movement and Residence under Article 12(1) of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

<sup>114</sup> Article 104, Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community, Article 104, signed on 30 November 1999 and entered into force on 7 July 2000.

Kenya; Gloria Kimani, a council member of the Law Society of Kenya and human rights activists Lynn Ngugi, Hussein Khalid and Hanifa Adan. Upon arrival at Julius Nyerere International Airport, the group was reportedly detained without explanation, had their passports confiscated, and were subsequently returned to Kenya.<sup>115</sup> Their visit was part of an international trial observation mission, but Tanzanian officials claimed they lacked the necessary permits to carry out legal or advocacy activities in the country.<sup>116</sup>

## 12. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings and recommendations in this briefing align with those issued in Amnesty International's 2020 report *"Lawfare: Repression by Law ahead of Tanzania's General Elections"* which found that laws had been used to form a comprehensive framework for political control, allowing the Tanzanian government to regulate opposition activities, suppress dissent, and control digital and economic spaces. While presented as reforms, the new laws' cumulative effect has been to shrink civic space ahead of the 2025 elections.

The findings of this briefing reveal a deeply entrenched pattern of state-led repression that has escalated in both scale and severity as Tanzania approaches its 2025 general elections. The documented violations—ranging from enforced disappearances, torture and other ill-treatment to digital censorship and politically motivated prosecutions—are not isolated incidents but part of a deliberate strategy to dismantle political participation and silence dissent.

The legal and institutional architecture in Tanzania has been recalibrated to serve political ends, enabling the government to operate with impunity while eroding the rule of law. The refusal of authorities to comply with court orders, the targeting of opposition figures through manipulated legal processes, and the weaponization of regulatory frameworks against civil society and media reflect a governance model increasingly hostile to accountability and transparency.

This briefing underscores the urgent need for both domestic and international actors to recognize the gravity of the situation. Without immediate and sustained action to reverse these trends, the 2025 elections risk becoming a procedural exercise devoid of legitimacy, conducted in an environment where fear, violence, and exclusion have replaced open political competition in an election wholly defined by abuse of the human rights of the people of Tanzania.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 12.1 TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA

- Publicly commit that the government will respect, protect, promote and fulfil human rights before, during and after the elections, will not tolerate any human rights violations and abuses, and will ensure prompt, thorough, transparent and effective investigation of any allegations of violations and abuses and bring suspected perpetrators to justice.
- Publicly condemn all threats, intimidation, harassment and attacks against opposition politicians, religious leaders, human rights defenders, activists, NGOs, media outlets, journalists, and social media users and respect and protect the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association for all individuals.

<sup>115</sup> Amnesty International telephone and one on one interviews with Martha Karua, Willy Mutunga, Gloria Kimani, Lynn Ngugi, Hussein Khalid and Hanifa Adan, May 2025.

<sup>116</sup> Tanzania's Minister for Constitutional and Legal Affairs, Dr. Damas Ndumbaro, defended the deportations, stating the group lacked permits to conduct legal or advocacy activities in Tanzania and had violated national laws.

- Publicly recognize and defend the importance and legitimacy of the human rights work of human rights defenders, activists and civil society organizations, and ensure that they can carry out their work freely and independently without any fear of reprisals.
- Ensure the urgent repeal and review of all repressive laws and regulations that violates international human rights standards, including the Media Services Act, Cybercrimes Act, and Public Order Act and bring any such laws and regulations in conformity with Tanzania's constitution and international human rights obligations and commitments.
- Publicly commit that your government will take steps to implement the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders into national law, and end intimidation and harassment of associations lawfully carrying out their mandates to defend other people's rights.
- Respond positively, with no further delay to the requests made by the UN Special Procedures, including the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and ensure full and unfettered access.

## **12.2 TO MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS**

- Conduct an independent investigation into incidents involving arbitrary arrests, torture and other ill-treatment. Ensure accountability for perpetrators, provide medical and psychological support, and guarantee legal redress and protection from future reprisals in the cases of Abdul Nondo, Agather Atuhairi, Boniface Mwangi, Khadija Anwar Mohamed, Mwabili Mwagodi and Said Muhuzi Bakari.
- Immediately end the practice of enforced disappearances and disclose the fate and whereabouts of all disappeared persons, including through conducting independent investigation into the incidents involving enforced disappearance. Ensure accountability for perpetrators and guarantee legal redress and protection from future reprisals in the cases of, Anthony Gabriel, Daniel Chonchorio, Deusdedith Soka, Dioniz Kipanya, Fakihi Ali Salim, Frank Mbise, Humphrey Polepole, Jacob Mlay, Mdude Nyagali, Shadrack Chaula, Sinda Mseti and Siza Mwita Keheta.
- Conduct an independent investigation into the incident involving the detention and assault of John Mnyika and ensure accountability for perpetrators, provide medical and psychological support, and guarantee legal redress and protection from future reprisals.
- Conduct prompt, thorough, and impartial investigations into all allegations of human rights violations, involving physical attacks against Charles Kitima and Edgar 'Sativa' Mwakabela, bring perpetrators to justice and guarantee legal redress and protection from future reprisals.
- Conduct an independent investigation into the incident involving abduction, torture, and extrajudicial killing of Ali Mohammed Kibao and guarantee legal redress and protection of members of his family from future reprisals.
- Conduct an independent investigation into the incident involving arrest and travel restrictions against Amani Golugwa, Brenda Rupia, Godbless Lema, Leonard Joseph Magere, Martha Karua, Willy Mutunga, Gloria Kimani, Lynn Ngugi, Hussein Khalid and Hanifa Adan to ensure accountability for perpetrators, and guarantee legal redress and protection from future reprisals.

## **12.3 TO MINISTER OF INFORMATION, CULTURE, ARTS AND SPORTS**

- Ensure the immediate and unconditional release of anyone detained solely for expressing political and religious views or other beliefs, including Tundu Lissu and drop all charges against him, as they appear to be politically motivated.
- Restore access to social media platforms and end censorship of online content.
- Ensure that media outlets are free to operate independently, and that journalists and other media practitioners can enjoy their human rights including the right to freedom of expression and access to information and can carry out their job without any fear of reprisals before, during and after the elections

## **12.4 TO MINISTER OF CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS AND JUSTICE**

- Immediately establish an independent mechanism to promptly, thoroughly, transparently and effectively conduct investigations into allegations of excessive use of force, arbitrary arrests, and other violations by police.
- Ensure the authorities fully and effectively respect, protect, promote and fulfil the human rights of everyone including the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.
- Carry out prompt, impartial, thorough, transparent and effective investigations into all allegations of threats and physical violence against opposition politicians and bring suspected perpetrators to justice in fair trials.

## **12.5 TO THE INDEPENDENT NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION**

- Fully comply with court orders without delay or selective interpretation, including the judgment reinstating Luhaga Mpina as the presidential candidate for ACT Wazalendo, overturning his disqualification by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).
- Uphold its constitutional independence as guaranteed under Article 74(11) of the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania, which states that the Commission shall not be subject to the direction or control of any other person or authority. This includes refraining from acting on instructions or influence from the Registrar of Political Parties, the Attorney General, or any other external body.
- Ensure that all political parties and candidates can campaign freely without harassment, intimidation, or violence.
- Conduct independent, thorough, transparent and effective investigations into allegations of misconduct leading to election-related human rights violations and hold anyone suspected to be responsible to account.
- Allow independent observers to freely carry out their work including monitoring the conduct of the election and the human rights environment surrounding the poll.

## **12.6 TO ALL POLITICAL PARTIES AND CANDIDATES**

- Publicly commit to promote respect for the human rights of everyone before, during and after elections, including the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly and without fear of reprisals.

## **12.7 TO ELECTION OBSERVATION GROUPS**

- Include human rights components in their election observation and make public their findings, including any failure of the authorities to take swift and effective remedial action in accordance with the international and regional human rights standards.
- Include coverage of human rights issues in areas where there are widely reported patterns of complaints or where there is history of electoral violence.
- Closely observe the impact of the security environment on human rights by paying particular attention to the actions taken by security forces to address any problems that may arise during the electoral period, to manage political demonstrations and rallies peacefully and to prevent any action in the electoral process that would lead or contribute to human rights violations and abuses.

## **12.8 TO THE EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY**

- Hold Tanzania accountable for rights violations against EAC Treaty principles on democracy, rule of law, and human rights in the cases involving abductions and forceful deportation of Agather Atuhairi, Boniface Mwangi and Mwabili Mwagodi.
- Support the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania to meet its rule of law and governance commitments as they relate to human rights under Article 6(d) of the EAC Treaty and relevant normative frameworks.
- Put pressure on the authorities to respect, protect, promote and fulfil the human rights of everyone including the rights to freedom of movement, expression, association and peaceful assembly.
- Raise Amnesty International's concerns and recommendations detailed above in your engagements with the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania and urge their immediate implementation.
- Raise, through explicit and proper channels, any human rights violations and abuses witnessed, or allegations of human rights violations and abuses received, including with the relevant authorities, for example, the Tanzania Police Force and the National Electoral Commission and review the situation before, during and after the elections.

## **12.9 TO THE SOUTHERN AFRICA DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY**

- Support the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania to meet its rule of law and governance commitments as they relate to human rights under Article 4(c) of the SADC Treaty.
- Put pressure on the authorities to respect, protect, promote and fulfil the human rights of everyone including the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.
- Raise Amnesty International's concerns and recommendations detailed above in your engagements with the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania and urge their immediate implementation.
- Raise, through explicit and proper channels, any human rights violations and abuses witnessed, or allegations of human rights violations and abuses received, including with the relevant authorities, for example, the Tanzania Police Force and the Independent National Electoral Commission and review the situation before, during and after the elections.



## **12.10 TO THE AFRICAN UNION**

### **12.10.1 AU COMMISSION CHAIRPERSON**

- Publicly condemn the increasing repression and human rights violations and abuses in Tanzania, including threats, intimidation, harassment and attacks against opposition politicians, religious leaders, human rights defenders, activists, non-governmental organisations, media outlets, journalists, and online users.
- Call on Tanzanian authorities to respect, protect, promote and fulfil the human rights of everyone, including the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, in accordance with Article 3(h) of the AU Constitutive Act.
- Ensure that if or when an African Union Election Observation Mission (AUEOM) is deployed to observe the elections, it documents the human rights violations and abuses committed before, during and after the elections.
- Raise Amnesty International's concerns and recommendations detailed above in your engagements with the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania and urge their immediate implementation.

### **12.10.2 AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS**

- Publicly condemn the increasing repression and human rights violations and abuses in Tanzania including threats, intimidation, harassment and attacks against opposition politicians, religious leaders, human rights defenders, activists, non-governmental organisations, media outlets, journalists, and online users.
- Call on Tanzanian authorities to respect, protect, promote and fulfil the human rights of everyone, including the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, in accordance with the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.
- Follow-up on Tanzania's implementation and compliance with the Commission's Resolution 640 (LXXXIV) of 30 July 2025 in which the Commission asked Tanzanian authorities to, among other measures, "ensure freedom of expression and access to information during the electoral period" and ensure that citizens are able to "exercise their right to vote in an environment free of intimidation, violence , or any other impediment".
- Urge the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania to fully comply with the Commission's 2017 Guidelines on Access to Information and Elections in Africa.

## **12.11 TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY**

- Publicly condemn the increasing repression and human rights violations and abuses in Tanzania including threats, intimidation, harassment and attacks against opposition politicians, religious leaders, human rights defenders, activists, non-governmental organisations, media outlets, journalists, and online users.
- Call on the authorities to respect, protect, promote and fulfil the human rights of everyone including the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.
- Urge the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania to fully comply with the United Nations Human Rights Committee, General Comment 25 on the right to participate in public affairs, voting rights and the right of equal access to public service.



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Index: 56/0376/2025

Publication: October 2025

Original language: English

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