



## United Republic of Tanzania

### Joint Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1** CIVICUS is a global alliance of civil society organisations (CSOs) and activists dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society around the world. Founded in 1993, CIVICUS has members in more than 180 countries throughout the world.
- 1.2** The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (DefendDefenders) is a regional CSO registered and based in Uganda. Established in 2005, DefendDefenders seeks to strengthen the work of human rights defenders (HRDs) throughout the East and Horn of Africa.
- 1.3** The Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC) is a civil society membership organisation that seeks to protect and promote the rights of HRDs in Tanzania.
- 1.4** The International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) is an independent CSO that promotes and protects human rights.
- 1.5** In this submission, the four organisations examine the Government of Tanzania's compliance with its international human rights obligations to create and maintain a safe and enabling environment for civil society. We analyse Tanzania's fulfilment of the rights to freedoms of association, expression and peaceful assembly and unwarranted restrictions on HRDs since its previous UPR examination in 2021. To this end, we assess Tanzania's implementation of recommendations received during the 3<sup>rd</sup> UPR cycle relating to these issues and provide follow-up recommendations.
- 1.6** During the 3<sup>rd</sup> UPR cycle, the Government of Tanzania received 31 recommendations relating to the space for civil society (civic space). It accepted 19 recommendations, partly accepted 10 and noted two. An evaluation of a range of legal sources and human rights documentation addressed in this submission demonstrates that the Government of Tanzania has partly implemented 10 recommendations relating to civic space. The government has persistently failed to address unwarranted restrictions on civic space since its last UPR examination.
- 1.7** We are deeply concerned by the government's systematic clampdown on freedom of online and offline expression through restrictive laws and broad interpretation of limitation clauses.
- 1.8** We are further alarmed by the erosion of democratic space through a chilling onslaught on freedoms of association and peaceful assembly, including peaceful political gatherings, the mass deregistration of CSOs and the systematic prosecution and exclusion of opposition parties and their candidates from political participation.

**1.9** As a result of these issues, civic space in Tanzania is currently classified as repressed by the CIVICUS Monitor, indicating the existence of severe civic space restrictions.<sup>1</sup>

- Section 2 of this submission examines Tanzania's implementation of UPR recommendations and compliance with international human rights standards concerning freedom of association.
- Section 3 examines Tanzania's implementation of UPR recommendations and compliance with international human rights standards related to the protection of civil society activists, HRDs and journalists.
- Section 4 examines Tanzania's implementation of UPR recommendations and compliance with international human rights standards concerning freedom of expression and media freedom.
- Section 5 examines Tanzania's implementation of UPR recommendations and compliance with international human rights standards related to freedom of peaceful assembly.
- Section 6 contains recommendations to address the concerns raised and advance implementation of recommendations under the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle.
- Section 7 is an annex on the implementation of 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle UPR recommendations related to civic space.

## **2. Freedom of association**

**2.1** During Tanzania's examination under the 2<sup>nd</sup> UPR cycle, the government received five recommendations on the right to freedom of association and creating an enabling environment for CSOs. The government accepted three recommendations, including to: 'Create and maintain a safe and conducive environment where all political parties and civil society organizations can exercise their rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of political participation without fear of reprisal'. It partly accepted one recommendation and noted another. It has partly implemented one recommendation and has otherwise failed to take adequate measures to realise the recommendations.

**2.2** Article 20 of the Tanzanian constitution guarantees the right to freedom of association. Article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Tanzania is a state party, also guarantees freedom of association.

**2.3** Despite these commitments, several laws and regulations unduly restrict the work of CSOs. The Non-Governmental Organizations Act of 2002, as amended in 2005 and 2019, regulates the registration, operation and funding of CSOs. While the law provides a legal framework, it also gives the government broad discretion to deny registration or impose restrictions. Registered CSOs must renew their certificate of registration every 10 years and are required to submit renewal applications six

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<sup>1</sup> CIVICUS Monitor: Tanzania, <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/tanzania>.

months before the expiry date.<sup>2</sup> CSOs are also subject to onerous financial reporting requirements, including a requirement to submit activity reports and audited financial reports to the National Council for NGOs and the NGO Coordination Board every year.<sup>3</sup>

- 2.4** Many CSOs fail to meet these onerous requirements and face restrictions on their operations as a result. In March 2023, the Registrar of NGOs deregistered around 5,000 organisations, barely 10 days after the Registrar issued a 14-day ultimatum to around 3,000 organisations to show cause why legal measures should not be taken against them for breaching the law after failing to submit annual reports and paying prescribed fees. Around 5,000 CSOs were deregistered earlier that year in January 2023.<sup>4</sup>
- 2.5** Opposition leaders, members and parties face significant restrictions in law, policy and practice. The Political Parties Act, amended in 2019, grants the government broad powers to interfere in party affairs, including to suspend members and deregister parties, as well as impose severe penalties for administrative violations.<sup>5</sup> The Registrar of Political Parties may demand information from political parties, and failure to comply constitutes a criminal offence punishable by fines or imprisonment. In some cases, parties may be suspended indefinitely or deregistered for administrative non-compliance. These provisions are often used to harass opposition groups and suppress political mobilisation through systematic arrests, detention and prosecution in frivolous cases.
- 2.6** Between July<sup>6</sup> and September<sup>7</sup> 2021, opposition leaders and members faced arrests, detention and legal harassment. At least 20 members of the main opposition party, Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (CHADEMA), were arrested ahead of planned meetings on constitutional reforms following the end of President John Magufuli's administration. Among those arrested was then party chairman Freeman Mbowe, who was charged with economic offences and financing terrorist activities. The party alleged that he was tortured in custody to force a statement.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Non-Governmental Organizations Act of 2002, sections 17(3)-(4).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., section 29(1)(a) and (b).

<sup>4</sup> 'NGO deregistrations worry activists', Daily News, 5 March 2023, <https://dailynews.co.tz/ngos-deregistration-worry-activists>.

<sup>5</sup> Political Parties Act, section 5(2).

<sup>6</sup> 'Attacks, pressure on dissent and opposition unrelenting', CIVICUS Monitor, 20 September 2021, <https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/attacks-pressure-dissent-and-opposition-unrelenting>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> 'Systematic crackdown on dissent continues', CIVICUS Monitor, 30 November 2021, <https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/systematic-crackdown-dissent-continues>.

- 2.7** Despite a public commitment in January 2023 by President Samia Suluhu Hassan to ensure an enabling environment for criticism of government by the opposition,<sup>9</sup> arbitrary bans, arrests and police interference continue to undermine the right to association for opposition members. These restrictions particularly applied ahead of the November 2024 local elections and the October 2025 general election. Between 11 and 13 August 2024, police arrested at least 375 CHADEMA leaders, members and supporters ahead of planned International Youth Day celebrations. Although police released several leaders on bail, they only released CHADEMA chairperson Tundu Lissu and others on 13 August 2024.<sup>10</sup>
- 2.8** Police arrested Lissu again on 9 April 2025 after he called for electoral reforms at a rally in Mbinga and advocated for a boycott of the October 2025 election, which he said would be rigged. He was charged with treason and publishing false information under the Cybercrimes Act 2015 and remains in detention at the time of writing.<sup>11</sup> Arrests of CHADEMA officials continued during 2025, including of deputy chairperson John Heche on 22 October 2025 and deputy secretary-general Amani Golugwa on 8 November 2025, amid a post-election crackdown on dissent.<sup>12</sup>
- 2.9** Opposition parties and candidates have also faced exclusion from elections. In April 2025, Tanzania's Independent National Electoral Commission (NEC) disqualified CHADEMA from the October 2025 election after it refused to sign a mandatory code of conduct, citing constitutional concerns and selective enforcement. The decision effectively barred the party from all electoral processes, including by-elections, until 2030,<sup>13</sup> despite the National Elections Act not clearly specifying a deadline to sign the code of conduct.<sup>14</sup> In August 2025, the NEC also disqualified ACT-Wazalendo presidential candidate Luhaga Mpina after the Registrar of Political Parties claimed his nomination breached the party's internal procedures.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> 'Reprieve for Maasai protestors, MPs mull tougher anti-LGBTQI+ law', CIVICUS Monitor, 28 April 2023, <https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/reprieve-for-maasai-protestors-mps-mull-tougher-anti-lgbtqi-law>.

<sup>10</sup> 'Authorities clamp down on freedoms ahead of local and general elections', CIVICUS Monitor, 31 August 2024, <https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/authorities-clamp-down-on-freedoms-ahead-of-local-and-general-elections>.

<sup>11</sup> 'Political repression escalates ahead of elections, apparent coordinated cross-border repression of HRDs a cause for concern', CIVICUS Monitor, 30 May 2025, <https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/political-repression-escalates-ahead-of-elections-apparent-coordinated-cross-border-repression-of-hrds-a-cause-for-concern>.

<sup>12</sup> 'Tanzania's post-election crackdown: widespread violence, arrests and suppression of civic freedoms', CIVICUS Monitor, 24 November 2025, <https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/tanzanias-post-election-crackdown-widespread-violence-arrests-and-suppression-of-civic-freedoms>.

<sup>13</sup> CIVICUS Monitor, 30 May 2025, op. cit.

<sup>14</sup> 'Tanzania: Deepening Repression Threatens Elections', Human Rights Watch, 29 September 2025, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/09/29/tanzania-deepening-repression-threatens-elections>.

<sup>15</sup> 'Government intensifies crackdown on opposition and online spaces ahead of 2025 elections', CIVICUS Monitor, 26 October 2025, <https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/government-intensifies-crackdown-on-opposition-online-spaces-ahead-of-2025-elections>.

**2.10** In a historic ruling on 13 June 2025, Tanzania’s Court of Appeal struck down provisions of the Basic Rights and Duties Enforcement Act that had barred individuals and CSOs from filing public interest cases without proving personal harm.<sup>16</sup> The decision restored the ability of CSOs to bring human rights cases on behalf of victims and communities, reversing restrictions introduced through the Written Laws (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act No. 3 of 2020.<sup>17</sup>

### **3. Harassment, intimidation and attacks against civil society activists, human rights defenders and journalists**

**3.1** Under Tanzania’s previous UPR examination, the government received 11 recommendations on the protection of civil society activists, HRDs and journalists. The government committed to several recommendations including to: ‘Ensure a safe and enabling environment for political parties, civil society organisations, and human rights defenders to exercise their legitimate activities effectively and independently’. It accepted eight recommendations, partly accepted two and noted one.<sup>18</sup> It has partly implemented one recommendation. As examined in this section, the government has failed to implement the recommendations effectively.

**3.2** Article 12 of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders mandates states to take the necessary measures to ensure the protection of HRDs. The ICCPR further guarantees freedoms of association, expression and peaceful assembly. However, despite these protections, significant challenges remain with respect to the enjoyment of fundamental freedoms, guarantee of civic space and protection of activists, HRDs and journalists.

**3.3** As of February 2026, Tanzania has yet to domesticate the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders through the adoption of specific national legislation or policies on the protection of HRDs, despite civil society efforts to this effect.<sup>19</sup> Tanzania’s legal framework contains several laws and policies that directly impact on civic space and

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<sup>16</sup> ‘Court of Appeal quashes restrictions on public interest litigation’, The Citizen, 17 June 2025, <https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/national/court-of-appeal-quashes-restrictions-on-public-interest-litigation-5082230>.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Tanzania: Joint Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review, 39th Session of the UPR Working Group’, CIVICUS et al, 2021, <https://www.civicus.org/images/Joint.UPRSubmissionTanzania.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup> ‘Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: United Republic of Tanzania’, UN Human Rights Council, 2022, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/49/13>; ‘Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: United Republic of Tanzania (addendum)’, UN Human Rights Council, 2022, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/49/13/Add.1>.

<sup>19</sup> ‘ACHPR77: Tanzanian civil society validates a human rights defenders policy’, ISHR, 3 November 2023 <https://ishr.ch/latest-updates/achpr77-tanzanian-civil-society-validates-a-human-rights-defenders-policy>.

the work of activists, HRDs and journalists, as described in other sections of this report.<sup>20</sup>

**3.4** Tanzanian authorities have systematically targeted activists, journalists and media workers with arbitrary arrests. Australian activist Zara Kay was arbitrarily detained over a satirical social media post in January 2021 and faced confiscation of belongings and ongoing criminal charges.<sup>21</sup> In April 2021, at least five reporters covering alleged abuses by local officials were briefly detained.<sup>22</sup> Cartoonist Oppertus John Fwema was arrested in September 2021 and charged with publishing false information under the Cybercrimes Act for an Instagram post that criticised President Suluhu.<sup>23</sup> Other journalists, including Earnest Mgawe and Harold Shemsanga,<sup>24</sup> were arrested while covering events. At least eight journalists were detained between January and February 2022 while reporting on forced evictions of the Maasai community and local abuses.<sup>25</sup>

**3.5** Activists, critics and journalists face enforced disappearances, physical attacks and threats to their lives. Since 2019, over 200 cases of enforced disappearances of HRDs, journalists and political opposition members have been documented.<sup>26</sup> In 2024, at least 48 incidents of abductions or attacks against activists, HRDs and others were documented.<sup>27</sup> For example, in June 2025, Japhet Matarra, a vocal government critic on Twitter/X, was violently attacked and left unconscious, with assailants disguised as medical staff later attempting to strike him again in hospital.<sup>28</sup> In September 2024, police assaulted and briefly detained Mwananchi Communications Limited journalists

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<sup>20</sup> The Media Services Act restricts the work of HRDs and journalists by giving power to the relevant minister to determine when content is deemed ‘of national importance’ and to prohibit the publication of matters relating to the cabinet. It also requires that bloggers obtain a licence. The Cybercrimes Act criminalises the publication of false information, and has been used to target online activists and critics. The Public Order Act creates a requirement for authorisation of public gatherings, which is contrary to international standards. The Penal Code criminalises defamation, sedition and publication of false information, and has been used to target activists, HRDs, journalists and political opponents critical of the government.

<sup>21</sup> ‘2020 elections marred with gross irregularities spark growing concern for civic space in Tanzania’, CIVICUS Monitor, 12 March 2021, <https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/2020-elections-marred-gross-irregularities-spark-growing-concern-civic-space-tanzania>.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Concerns over media freedom remain despite positive presidential signals’, CIVICUS Monitor, 29 April 2021, <https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/concerns-over-media-freedom-remain-despite-positive-presidential-signals>.

<sup>23</sup> ‘Systematic crackdown on dissent continues’, CIVICUS Monitor, 30 November 2021, <https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/systematic-crackdown-dissent-continues>.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> ‘President Suluhu acts on promise to expand media freedoms, arbitrary arrests of journalists continue’, CIVICUS Monitor, 17 May 2022, <https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/president-suluhu-acts-promise-expand-media-freedoms-arbitrary-arrests-journalists-continue>.

<sup>26</sup> ‘Tanzania: UN Experts alarmed by pattern of enforced disappearance and torture to silence opposition and critics’, UN OHCHR, June 2025, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/06/tanzania-un-experts-alarmed-pattern-enforced-disappearance-and-torture>.

<sup>27</sup> ‘Situation Report on Human Rights Defenders and Civic Space in Tanzania’, THRD, 2024, <https://thrdc.org/online-center/reports-views>. CIVICUS Monitor, 26 October 2025, op. cit.

Baraka Loshilaa, Michael Matemanga and Lawrence Mnubi while they covered a banned CHADEMA protest.<sup>29</sup>

**3.6** In May 2025, Ugandan HRD Agather Atuhairi and Kenyan activist Boniface Mwangi, part of a delegation observing Tundu Lissu's trial, were forcibly deported from Tanzania after days of arbitrary and incommunicado detention, sexual assault and torture. Mwangi was abandoned at the Kenya-Tanzania border and Atuhairi was left at the Tanzania-Uganda border, both severely beaten. Other prominent Kenyan activists, including lawyer Martha Karua and former Chief Justice Willy Mutunga, were also stopped and held at the airport before being deported.<sup>30</sup>

## **4. Freedom of expression and media freedom**

**4.1** During the third UPR cycle Tanzania received 19 recommendations on freedom of expression and media freedom and access to information. It accepted 10 and partly accepted nine. However, as examined in this section, the government has persistently failed to protect freedom of expression and has continued to implement draconian laws and regulations to stifle expression.

**4.2** ICCPR article 19 guarantees the right to hold opinions without interference and the right to freedom of expression, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds. Article 18 of Tanzania's constitution guarantees the right to freedoms of expression and opinion. Although media freedom is not explicitly framed as a constitutional right, it is generally understood to derive from these broader protections.

**4.3** Despite these legal protections, authorities systematically interpret limitation clauses broadly to enable restrictions on the basis of national security, public morality, public order and public safety.

**4.4** The Media Services Act 2016 establishes the legal and regulatory framework governing the operations of journalists, media institutions and media services in Tanzania. Several provisions impose restrictions on media activity and the dissemination of information. For instance, accreditation is mandatory for individuals wishing to practise journalism,<sup>31</sup> while the minister responsible for information has broad discretionary power to prohibit the publication of information deemed harmful to national security, public health or public safety.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> 'Media workers continue to be a target', CIVICUS Monitor, 31 December 2024, <https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/media-workers-continue-to-be-a-target>.

<sup>30</sup> CIVICUS Monitor, 30 May 2025, op. cit.

<sup>31</sup> Media Services Act, section 13.  
Ibid., sections 19 and 20.

**4.5** Despite a landmark East African Court of Justice decision in 2019,<sup>33</sup> the Media Act still carries several restrictive provisions that were found to unjustifiably restrict freedom of expression and media freedom. Sections 7(3), 19, 20, 21, 35–40, 50, 52–54 and 58–59 were declared inconsistent with the principles of democracy, good governance and the rule of law under the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community.<sup>34</sup> For example, publication of false news where it is deemed likely to disturb public peace is still a criminal offence under the Act even though it was mentioned in the court’s ruling.<sup>35</sup>

**4.6** Nevertheless, some progress has been made. On 13 June 2023, the Media Services Act was amended through the Written Laws (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act No. 1 of 2023. The amendments reclassified defamation from a criminal to a civil matter and removed the courts’ powers to confiscate media equipment.<sup>36</sup>

**4.7** The Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) Regulations 2020 regulate online publishing and digital content dissemination in Tanzania. The regulations impose licensing obligations on bloggers and online content providers<sup>37</sup> and empower the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA) to remove content considered contrary to morality or public order, or that is deemed to violate the regulations or other applicable laws.<sup>38</sup>

**4.8** In practice, the TCRA has increasingly used its regulatory powers to restrict online media and digital platforms. In May 2025, the TCRA shut down over 80,000 blogs, online platforms, social media accounts and websites on the basis that they had ‘unethical content’ that was harmful to children, though the scale and lack of transparency raised censorship concerns.<sup>39</sup> The authority also ordered independent outlet The Chanzo to remove an article on abductions in May 2025<sup>40</sup> and suspended the public discussion platform JamiiForums for 90 days in September 2025 for allegedly publishing disrespectful and misleading content.<sup>41</sup> In October 2024, the TCRA suspended Mwananchi Communications Limited’s online publications for 30 days over an animated video referencing reported killings and abductions of

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<sup>33</sup> ‘Media Council of Tanzania & Others v Attorney General of Tanzania’, East African Court of Justice, 2019, <https://www.eacj.org/?cases=reference-no-2-of-2017-media-council-of-tanzania-legal-and-human-rights-centre-tanzania-human-rights-defenders-coalition-vs-the-attorney-general-of-the-united-republic-of-tanzania>.

<sup>34</sup> ‘Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community’, articles 6(d) and 7(2), 1999 [https://www.eacj.org/?page\\_id=33](https://www.eacj.org/?page_id=33).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., section 50.

<sup>36</sup> ‘One Step Forward: Tanzania’s journey towards decriminalization of media offenses’, Internews, 31 July 2023, <https://internews.org/story/one-step-forward-tanzanias-journey-towards-decriminalization-of-media-offenses>.

<sup>37</sup> Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) Regulations 2020, regulation 7.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., regulations 12 and 14

<sup>39</sup> CIVICUS Monitor, 26 October 2025, op. cit.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

government critics.<sup>42</sup> In July 2022, it ordered the DarMpya outlet to suspend operations after stating its licence had expired and alleging breaches of online content regulations.<sup>43</sup> Bloggers Baraka and Heri Magoti were also arrested and charged in December 2022 for alleged publication of false information and operating a YouTube account without a licence.<sup>44</sup>

**4.9** The Cybercrimes Act criminalises the publication of ‘false, deceptive, misleading or inaccurate information’. Online content creators and opposition members are often targeted with prosecution under this law for their online expression, as seen with the ongoing case of Tundu Lissu (see 2.8).

**4.10** Authorities often restrict social media access, particularly during election periods. In May 2025, the government restricted access to Twitter/X and blocked platforms including Clubhouse and Telegram, citing concerns about pornographic content.<sup>45</sup> The government has used similar measures during previous elections. Authorities ordered the suspension of bulk SMS and voice calls to prevent mass messaging and heavily restricted access to social media platforms, including Twitter/X and WhatsApp, around the October 2020 election.<sup>46</sup> In August 2024, internet service providers blocked nationwide access to Twitter/X following a government directive citing security concerns.<sup>47</sup> Amid this context of restrictions, in October 2023, the TCRA banned the use of VPNs without a permit, imposing fines and prison sentences for non-compliance.<sup>48</sup> This ban remains in place.

## **5. Freedom of peaceful assembly**

**5.1** During Tanzania’s examination under the 3rd UPR cycle, the government received 11 recommendations on the right to peaceful assembly. It accepted eight recommendations, including ‘To ensure freedom of assembly and expression to enable political and civic space, so that political parties, the media and civil society organizations can operate safely and fully exercise their rights’, ‘To ensure that the laws governing the right to freedom of peaceful assembly are fully in line with the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights’, and ‘to create and maintain a safe and conducive environment where all political parties and civil

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<sup>42</sup> CIVICUS Monitor, 31 December 2024, op. cit.

<sup>43</sup> ‘Reprieve proves elusive for Maasai community protesting evictions’, CIVICUS Monitor, 1 November 2022, <https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/reprieve-proves-elusive-maasai-community-protesting-evictions>.

<sup>44</sup> ‘Situation Report on Human Rights Defenders and Civic Space in Tanzania’, pages 32-34, THRDC, 2023, <https://thrdc.org/tz/reportsfiles/Situation%20Report%20on%20Human%20Rights%20Defenders%20and%20Civic%20Space%20in%20Tanzania%202023.pdf>.

<sup>45</sup> CIVICUS Monitor, 26 October 2025, op. cit.

<sup>46</sup> CIVICUS Monitor, 12 March 2021, op. cit.

<sup>47</sup> CIVICUS Monitor, 31 December 2024, op. cit.

<sup>48</sup> ‘Tanzania’s opposition holds country’s first major protests in seven years’, CIVICUS Monitor, 29 March 2024, <https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/tanzanias-opposition-holds-countrys-first-major-protests-in-seven-years>.

society organizations can exercise their rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of political participation without fear of reprisal'. It partly accepted three recommendations. It has implemented none of the recommendations.

- 5.2** Although ICCPR article 21 and article 20 of the constitution guarantee the right to freedom of assembly, in practice, law enforcement officers often prohibit lawful assemblies. The Police Force and Auxiliary Services Act 1969 is a major hindrance to freedom of peaceful assembly as the police use disputed provisions of the law, particularly sections 43, 44, 45 and 46, to ban public meetings, particularly political meetings, unjustifiably. These sections empower the police to disperse, prevent and stop assemblies and gatherings.
- 5.3** In 2023, President Suluhu lifted<sup>49</sup> the ban on political rallies that had been in place for six-and-a-half years. Following this decision, hundreds of CHADEMA supporters protested to demand greater political liberalisation ahead of the 2025 election, in Tanzania's first major demonstration following the end of the ban. However, this freedom was short lived: police banned a rally organised by CHADEMA ahead of youth day and arrested hundreds of people (see 2.7).<sup>50</sup>
- 5.4** Authorities violently repressed protests that erupted in Arusha, Dar es Salam, Mbeya and Mwanza following the October 2025 election. Credible reports documented that police and unidentified security personnel killed hundreds of people between 29 October and 2 November 2025.<sup>51</sup> Tanzanian police and security forces and individuals in plainclothes used live ammunition and teargas and assaulted people they regarded as violating stay-at-home orders issued by the government during the protests. In some cases, victims appeared to have been shot dead despite posing no threat to public order or the security of others.<sup>52</sup>
- 5.5** As of 18 November 2025, preliminary findings following a fact-finding mission conducted by the Legal and Human Rights Centre, Tanganyika Law Society and Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition showed that over 700 people from at least nine regions faced prosecution for treason and other charges. The organisations

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<sup>49</sup> 'Tanzania president lifts six-year ban on political rallies', Reuters, 3 January 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/tanzania-president-lifts-six-year-ban-political-rallies-2023-01-03>.

<sup>50</sup> 'Tanzania is at a dangerous crossroads', The Continent, Issue 175, 7 September 2024, [https://www.thecontinent.org/files/ugd/287178\\_118fb80314864b5480563e267e3614cf.pdf](https://www.thecontinent.org/files/ugd/287178_118fb80314864b5480563e267e3614cf.pdf).

'Tanzania: Killings, Crackdown Follow Disputed Elections', Human Rights Watch, 4 November 2025, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/11/04/tanzania-killings-crackdown-follow-disputed-elections>; UN News, 'Tanzania: Reports of hundreds killed and detained following deadly election violence', UN News, 11 November 2025, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/11/1166334>.

<sup>52</sup> 'Oh my God, this is our Tanzania'. CNN investigation shows police fatally shooting protesters, signs of mass graves', CNN, 25 November 2025, <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/11/21/africa/tanzania-police-shooting-protesters-deadly-election-intl-invs>.

documented serious procedural irregularities, including arbitrary arrests and the detention of children.<sup>53</sup>

## 6. Recommendations to the Government of Tanzania

CIVICUS, DefendDefenders, ISHR and THRDC call on the Government of Tanzania to create and maintain, in law and in practice, an enabling environment for civil society, in accordance with the rights enshrined in the ICCPR, the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and Human Rights Council resolutions 22/6, 27/5 and 27/31.

At a minimum, the following conditions should be guaranteed: freedoms of association, expression and peaceful assembly, the right to operate free from unwarranted state interference, the right to communicate and cooperate, the right to seek and secure funding and the state's duty to protect. In the light of this, the following specific recommendations are made:

### 6.1 Freedom of association

- Take measures to foster a safe, respectful and enabling environment for civil society, including by removing legal and policy measures that unwarrantedly limit freedom of association.
- Take measures to foster a safe, respectful, inclusive and democratic environment for opposition parties and their members, including by removing legal and policy measures that unwarrantedly limit freedom of association.
- Abolish criminal responsibility for organising and participating in the activities of non-registered organisations and lift the ban on the activities of non-registered organisations.
- Immediately reinstate any CSOs that have been arbitrarily and unduly sanctioned or deregistered.
- Refrain from acts leading to the closure of CSOs or the suspension of their peaceful activities, and instead promote a meaningful political dialogue that allows and embraces diverging views, including those of CSOs, HRDs, journalists, political activists and others.

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<sup>53</sup> Via Jambo TV, Twitter/X post, 18 November 2025, <https://x.com/jambotv/status/1990876046720381009>. Dr Juma Homera, Tanzania's Minister for Constitution and Legal Affairs, disclosed that 2,045 people were rounded up during and following the demonstrations. On 26 November 2025, Homera said that 1,736 people were set to be released following a presidential directive. President Suluhu instructed the Director of Public Prosecutions to review cases of those who complied with legal procedures and recommend their release.

- Amend The Non-Governmental Organizations Act 2002 to remove onerous registration and reporting requirements that hinder freedom of association to bring it into compliance with ICCPR articles 21 and 22.
- Create an enabling environment for pluralistic political participation and guarantee equal political participation for opposition parties in line with democratic principles.
- Refrain from acts leading to the disruption of peaceful activities of opposition parties and members.
- Immediately release all opposition members facing prosecution for their peaceful expression and drop all spurious charges against them.

## **6.2 Protection of civil society activists, human rights defenders and journalists**

- Guarantee a safe, secure and enabling environment for the legitimate work of civil society activists, HRDs and journalists without fear of acts of intimidation, legal and administrative harassment, obstruction, reprisals or undue hindrance.
- Conduct effective, impartial and thorough investigations into all cases of attacks, harassment and intimidation against HRDs and bring the perpetrators of such offences to justice.
- Immediately and unconditionally release all HRDs, including journalists and bloggers, detained for exercising their fundamental rights to freedoms of association, expression and peaceful assembly and review their cases to prevent further harassment.
- Amend the Cybercrimes Act, Media Services Act and Penal Code to repeal the provisions that unduly restrict and criminalise the legitimate work of HRDs.
- Adopt an HRD policy.

## **6.3 Freedom of expression and media freedom**

- Ensure freedom of expression and media freedom by all bringing national legislation into line with international standards.
- Reinstate all media outlets that have unwarrantedly been closed.
- Ensure that journalists and writers may work freely and without fear of retribution for expressing critical opinions or covering topics the government may deem sensitive.

- Take steps to lift restrictions on freedom of expression and adopt a framework for the protection of journalists from harassment, intimidation and persecution.
- Develop an action plan to ensure that internet laws comply with the government's commitment to guarantee freedom of expression, media freedom and access to information, including by ceasing censorship, ensuring free access to electronic media and enabling bloggers, journalists and other internet users to play a full and active role in promoting and protecting human rights.
- Refrain from adopting any laws that provide for censorship or undue control over social and conventional media content.
- Refrain from censoring social and conventional media and ensure that freedom of expression is safeguarded in all arenas, including in the arts.
- Amend the provisions of the Cybercrimes Act, including section 16 relating to publication of false information, in order to bring it into line with the ICCPR and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.
- Amend the Media Services Act 2016, taking into account the judgment of the East African Court of Justice in the case of Media Council of Tanzania & Others v Attorney General of Tanzania, with a view to strengthening safeguards for freedom of expression and media independence.
- Amend the Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) Regulations to ensure that registration of bloggers and related online platforms and television services is free.
- Take measures to promote and protect a safe and enabling environment for journalists, media practitioners and online commentators, including by ensuring that they are able to carry out their professional activities without harassment, intimidation or undue interference.
- Promote and convene regular consultations and dialogues with CSOs, media stakeholders and relevant professional bodies to review and reform laws and policies affecting freedom of expression, media freedom and access to information.
- Provide training and guidance to law enforcement authorities, prosecutors and regulatory bodies on international standards relating to freedom of expression and media freedom.

#### **6.4 Freedom of peaceful assembly**

- End the use of excessive and lethal force against protesters and ensure justice and accountability for violations, including election-related killings
- Adopt best practices on freedom of peaceful assembly, as put forward by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association in his 2012 annual report, which calls for procedures in which there is simple notification of assemblies being held, rather than explicit permission being needed to assemble.
- Amend the Police Force and Auxiliary Services Act 1969 to guarantee fully the right to freedom of peaceful assembly.
- Immediately and unconditionally release all HRDs, journalists and protesters detained for exercising their right to freedom of peaceful assembly and review their cases to prevent further harassment.
- Review and if necessary update human rights training for police and security forces, with the assistance of independent CSOs, to foster the more consistent application of international human rights standards, including the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms.
- Publicly condemn at the highest levels the use of lethal and excessive force by security forces in the dispersal of protests, launch a formal investigation into any such instances and bring the perpetrators to justice.
- Provide recourse for judicial review and effective remedy, including compensation, in cases of unlawful denial of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly by state authorities.

#### **6.5 Access to UN Special Procedures mandate holders**

- The government should extend a standing invitation to all UN Special Procedure mandate holders and prioritise official visits by the: 1) Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; 2) Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression; 3) Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association; 4) Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers; 5) Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; and 6) Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

## **6.6 State engagement with civil society**

- Implement transparent and inclusive mechanisms of public consultations with CSOs on all issues mentioned above and enable the more effective involvement of civil society in the preparation of law and policy.
- Include CSOs in the UPR process before finalising and submitting the national report.
- Systematically consult with civil society on the implementation of UPR recommendations, including by holding periodical comprehensive consultations with a diverse range of civil society.
- Incorporate the results of this UPR into action plans for the promotion and protection of all human rights, taking into account the proposals of civil society, and present a midterm evaluation report to the Human Rights Council on the implementation of the recommendations of this session.

**7. Annex: Assessment of implementation of civic space recommendations under the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle (EXAMPLE - matrix provided upon identification of country)**

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Evaluation /comments on the level of implementation</b>
147.82 Amend the Media Services Act of 2016 to comply with international standards	Supported	Expression	<u>Partially implemented</u> Source: 4.5,4.6
147.83 Take further measures to ensure freedom of expression and protect journalists and the media from harassment, assault, arbitrary arrest or detention and enforced disappearances	Supported	Expression Journalists	Expression: <u>Partially implemented</u> Source: 4.1 – 4.10  Journalists: <u>Not implemented</u> Source: 3.4, 3.5
147.84 Take additional steps to ensure the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and political participation	Supported	Expression Peaceful Assembly	Expression: <u>Partially implemented</u> Source: 4.6  Assembly: <u>Not Implemented</u> Source: 5.2 – 5.5
147.85 Promote freedom of the media by ensuring full compliance of the Media Service Bill of 2015 with the right to freedom of expression and implementing the necessary legislative changes	Supported	Expression	<u>Partially implemented</u> Source: 4.4 – 4.10

<p>147.86 Guarantee the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and peaceful association as well as freedom of the press, in the first place by freeing political activists, lawyers and journalists detained on abstract grounds</p>	<p>Supported</p>	<p>Expression Association  Peaceful Assembly  HRDs/Journalists</p>	<p>Expression: <u>Partially implemented</u> Source: 4.1 – 4.10  Assembly: <u>Not Implemented</u> Source: 5.2 – 5.5  Association: <u>Not Implemented</u> Source: 2.3 – 2.10  HRDs/Journalists: <u>Not Implemented</u> - Source: 3.3 – 3.6</p>
<p>147.89 Ensure full respect for the right to freedom of expression by removing all obstacles to the right to freedom of expression and media freedom</p>	<p>Supported</p>	<p>Expression</p>	<p>Expression: <u>Partially implemented</u>  Source: 4.6</p>
<p>147.92 Promote and protect the right to freedom of expression and media freedom, as well as the safety of journalists</p>	<p>Supported</p>	<p>Expression  Journalists</p>	<p>Expression: <u>Partially implemented</u>  Source: 4.6  Journalists: <u>Not Implemented</u>  Source: 3.4, 3.5</p>
<p>147.94 Protect freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, bring laws restricting these freedoms into line with international standards and combat impunity for</p>	<p>Supported</p>	<p>Expression Association  Peaceful Assembly  HRDs</p>	<p>Expression: <u>Partially implemented</u>  Source: 4.4 – 4.10  Assembly: <u>Not Implemented</u>  Source: 5.2 – 5.5  Association: <u>Not Implemented</u></p>

attacks on journalists, human rights defenders and peaceful political actors in line with target 16.10 of the Sustainable Development Goals			Source: 2.3 – 2.10 HRDs/Journalists: <u>Not Implemented</u> Source: 3.3 – 3.6
147.95 Take further steps to ensure respect for the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly	Supported	Expression Peaceful Assembly	Expression: <u>Partially implemented</u> Source: 4.1 – 4.10 Assembly: <u>Not Implemented</u> Source: 5.2 – 5.5
147.96 Ensure that human rights defenders and political dissidents can freely exercise their human rights without fear of reprisal	Supported	HRDs	<u>Not Implemented</u> Source: 3.3 – 3.6
145.51 Conduct full and impartial investigations of all threats and attacks against and killings of journalists, civil society actors and human rights defenders, and hold perpetrators accountable	Supported	HRDs Journalists	<u>Not Implemented</u> Source: 3.5
147.102 Ensure a safe and enabling environment for political parties, civil society organizations and human rights defenders to exercise	Supported	HRDs Association	Association: <u>Not Implemented</u> Source: 2.3 – 2.10 HRDs: <u>Not Implemented</u>

their legitimate activities effectively and independently			Source: 3.3 – 3.6 Source: 5.2 – 5.5
147.69 Take steps to promptly and effectively investigate and provide information on cases of arbitrary arrest and detention of political opponents, activists, protesters and dissenting journalists	Supported	Peaceful Assembly HRDs	HRDs: <u>Not Implemented</u> Source: 3.5 Assembly: <u>Not implemented</u> Source: 5.4, 5.5
147.101 Ensure freedom of assembly and expression to enable a political and civic space, so that political parties, the media and civil society organizations can operate safely and fully exercise their rights	Supported	Peaceful Assembly Expression	<u>Expression: Not Implemented</u> Source: 4.5 – 4.10 <u>Assembly: Not Implemented</u> Source: 5.2 – 5.5
147.103 Ensure that the laws governing the right to freedom of peaceful assembly are fully in line with the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	Supported	Peaceful Assembly	<u>Not Implemented</u> Source: 5.2 – 5.5
147.105 Create and maintain a safe and conducive environment where all political parties	Supported	Peaceful Assembly	<u>Not Implemented</u> Source: 5.2 – 5.5

and civil society organizations can exercise their rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of political participation without fear of reprisal			
147.80 Repeal or amend laws unreasonably restricting freedom of expression, including the 2015 Statistics Act, the 2015 Cybercrimes Act and the 2016 Media Services Act	Supported /Noted	Expression	<u>Partially implemented</u> Source: 4.3 – 4.10
147.81 Amend the domestic legal framework to ensure respect for the rights to freedom of expression, to freedom of peaceful assembly and association and to trial without undue delay, and to facilitate their exercise by all Tanzanians, including through civil society organizations, political parties and the media	Supported /Noted	Expression Association Peaceful Assembly	Expression: <u>Partially implemented</u> Source: 4.3 – 4.10  Association: <u>Partially implemented</u> Source: 2.10  Assembly: <u>Not implemented</u>  Source: 5.2
147.87 Amend the Media Services Act, the Political Parties Act and related legislation to ensure	Supported /Noted	Expression Peaceful Assembly	Expression: <u>Partially implemented</u>  Source: 4.6

freedom of expression and assembly are protected			Assembly: <u>Not implemented</u> Source: 5.2
147.88 Review legislation, including the Cybercrimes Act, to ensure that freedom of the press, as well as freedom of expression and opinion, is protected	Supported /Noted	Expression	<u>Partially implemented</u> Source: 4.3 – 4.10
147.90 Ensure that the right to freedom of expression is duly respected and intensify efforts to protect the rights of persons belonging to religious minorities	Supported /Noted	Expression	<u>Partially implemented</u> Source: 4.1 – 4.10
147.93 Ensure, through dialogue and technical support, that the different laws and regulations governing the media sector, for example the Cybercrimes Act 2015, the Media Services Act 2016, the Access to Information Act 2016 and the Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) Regulations 2020, are in full compliance with human rights, including freedom of expression	Supported /Noted	Expression	<u>Partially implemented</u> Source: 4.4 – 4.10

147.98 Repeal or amend national legislation that restricts civil society like human rights defenders and journalists from exercising their rights and fundamental freedoms without fear of scrutiny and reprisal, including the three relevant acts, so that it complies with international standards	Supported /Noted	HRDs/Journalists	<u>Partially implemented</u> Source: 2.10 Source: 4.6
147.99 Respect fully and protect the rights to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression, and enshrine into law the right to a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders, journalists and media workers	Supported /Noted	Peaceful Assembly  Expression  HRDS	HRDs: <u>Not implemented</u> Source: 3.3 – 3.6 Expression: <u>Not Implemented</u> Source: 4.1 – 4.10 Assembly: <u>Not implemented</u> Source: 5.2 – 5.9
147.104 Guarantee freedom of assembly, association, expression and press freedom for members of all political parties, the media and civil society organizations by, inter alia,	Supported /Noted	Expression	<u>Partially implemented</u> Source: 4-1 – 4.10

reforming the Cybercrimes Act and the Media Act			
147.91 Amend or repeal aspects of the Political Parties Act, the Media Services Act and the Electronic and Postal Communications Act to promote freedom of expression	Supported /Noted	Expression	<u>Partially implemented</u> Source: 4.6
147.79 Ensure access to justice, including by addressing the use of non-bailable offences targeting politicians, businessmen, journalists and human rights defenders, and ensure it complies with due process standards	Noted	HRDs	<u>Not implemented</u> Source: 2.8
147.100 Amend the Non-Governmental Organizations Act (Amendments) Regulation 2018 in line with international human rights standards on freedoms of association and peaceful assembly	Noted	Association	<u>Not implemented</u> Source: 2.3