



REDRESS



OMCT
SOS-Torture Network



JOINT SUBMISSION TO THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL'S FOURTH UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW OF TANZANIA

9 APRIL 2026

SUBMITTING ORGANISATIONS

REDRESS was founded in 1992 and works to secure justice and reparation for survivors of torture through strategic litigation, challenges impunity for perpetrators, and advocates for legal and policy reforms to combat torture and provide effective reparations. As part of its Dissent programme, REDRESS challenges torture against human rights defenders, journalists, lawyers, protesters, and activists through projects that use strategic litigation to highlight the issue, determine responsibility, and push for policy reform.

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Change Africa Trust unites civil rights activists across Eastern Africa — regardless of gender, religion, or background — to strengthen human rights and democracy. It focuses on promoting values, supporting democracy, defending human rights, increasing political engagement, advocating good governance, emphasising citizens' duties and responsibilities, monitoring accountability, and campaigning for economic fairness.

Center for Strategic Litigation (CSL) is a Tanzania based not for profit organisation that seeks to advance the vision of a just and tolerant society, and a vibrant and inclusive democracy grounded in respect for the rule of Law and justice for all. Based in Zanzibar, the Center works at the interface of advocacy and litigation. CSL was founded to advance a democratic culture in Tanzania where the supremacy of the constitution and respect for the Rule of Law are central pillars. CSL deploys the law to encourage citizen agency in advancing the rule of law through strategic litigation, public education, petitioning, legal research and judicial reviews as well as strategic use of media, especially online media. CSL seeks to advance the development of case law on democracy, rule of law and freedom of expression in Tanzania.

International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT) is the world's largest membership-based organisation specialising in the treatment and documentation of torture. Operating at the intersection of medicine and law, IRCT currently has 173 member centres in 80 countries across every region of the world, staffed by around 4,000 professionals – doctors, psychologists, lawyers, social workers, physiotherapists, and others.

The International Federation of ACATs (FIACAT) is an international Christian non-governmental human rights organisation, set up in 1987, which works towards the eradication of torture and the abolition of the death penalty. The Federation brings together some thirty national associations, the ACATs, present in three continents.

[Omega Research Foundation \(Omega\)](#) works to identify and expose human rights abuses committed by people using police, security and military equipment. Omega tracks the development, procurement, and use of weapons, and pushes for stronger controls at each stage.

[The Pan African Lawyers Union \(PALU\)](#) is the premier continental membership forum of and for individual African lawyers and lawyers' associations in Africa. PALU has extensive experience in defending the independence of the legal profession and protecting lawyers, human rights defenders, journalists, and other civic actors at risk, including through strategic litigation before regional courts and tribunals. It engages with regional and international human rights mechanisms to advance accountability and strengthen human rights protections, contributes to legal and policy reform across Africa, provides technical legal expertise, and undertakes advocacy initiatives to safeguard civic space, access to justice, and the integrity of judicial and legal institutions.

[World Organisation Against Torture \(OMCT\)](#) works with around 200 member organisations which constitute its SOS-Torture network to end torture, fight impunity and protect human rights defenders worldwide.

The United Against Torture Consortium (UATC) brings together the Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT), FIACAT, IRCT, Omega, REDRESS and OMCT. Combining the expertise, capacity, and access to their respective networks, the UATC, through the six leading anti-torture organisations, is implementing, since June 2023, a collective programme of work to strengthen and expand the anti-torture movement. Relevant publications include "[Protesting Without Fear: A policy framework to end torture and ill-treatment in the context of protests](#)" and "[Challenging Repression: A guide to addressing the misuse of police weapons in protests](#)". This submission was prepared by the following UATC members: FIACAT, IRCT, Omega, REDRESS and OMCT.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite Tanzania's acceptance of key recommendations during its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2021, the Government has not taken sufficient steps to implement them in practice. Instead, the period from 2021 to 2025 has been marked by an escalation in repression, including with the use of torture and other ill-treatment, enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests, violent crackdowns on protests, internet shutdowns, and restrictions on media and digital platforms to silence dissenting voices. These violations have particularly intensified in the context of the 2025 elections and are frequently carried out with impunity, raising serious concerns about Tanzania's commitment to its international obligations and the recommendations it accepted in 2021.

As detailed in this submission, these violations are not isolated, but reflect a pattern of repression targeting human rights defenders, journalists, political opponents, and others perceived to be critical of the Government. At the same time, there is little evidence of prompt, independent and impartial investigations into allegations of torture or other ill-treatment, enforced disappearances, unlawful killings, and other serious human rights violations, contributing to a climate of fear, reprisals, and entrenched impunity.

Tanzania has also failed to take steps to ratify core international treaties such as the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT) and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED).

We therefore encourage UN Member States to respond with heightened scrutiny and robust, targeted recommendations that reflect the gravity and systematic nature of the violations documented. States should call for immediate and concrete measures to end torture, ill-treatment, and other grave violations, and to ensure prompt, independent and impartial investigations capable of holding perpetrators accountable, as well as provide effective redress to victims and survivors.

Recommendations

- a) Ratify UNCAT within a clear timeline and adopt a time-bound implementation plan, and complete ICPPED ratification.
- b) Criminalise torture as a specific offence in domestic law, in line with UNCAT.
- c) Ratify the Optional Protocol to UNCAT and establish an independent and adequately resourced National Preventive Mechanism.
- d) End the use of arbitrary arrest, cross-border kidnapping, incommunicado detention, torture, enforced disappearance and other ill-treatment, including against human rights defenders, activists, political opponents, refugees, and others who dissent.
- e) Ensure safeguards to all persons deprived of liberty, including detention records, access to a lawyer, family members, and independent medical examinations to all detainees, and exclude evidence obtained under torture and other ill-treatment from proceedings.
- f) Ensure law enforcement operations – including the policing of assemblies – comply with the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms and other international obligations, and investigate all allegations of excessive force, torture,

other ill-treatment, and other human rights violations, including in the context of protests around the 2025 elections.

- g) Strictly control the design, transfer, selection, and testing of all law enforcement equipment, and ensure a thorough independent review - based on international human rights law and standards - is carried out by independent medical, legal, police, and other experts to ascertain whether the equipment is fit for use in law enforcement.
- h) Ensure national controls on the trade of law enforcement equipment are robust and effective, and support the development of a Torture-Free trade Treaty. Controls should, inter alia, (i) prohibit the production, promotion, trade, transfer, and use of law enforcement equipment with no practical use other than for torture or other ill-treatment; and (ii) control the trade in law enforcement equipment that could be easily used for torture and other ill-treatment.
- i) Conduct regular human rights training and awareness programmes for law enforcement, military, prison staff, and other actors, including on anti-torture standards, and on the use of equipment to ensure the use of peaceful means to resolve situations where possible, and that officials attain to a minimum level of competency before being issued with equipment.
- j) Amend or repeal provisions of the Public Order Act that enable undue restrictions on peaceful assembly.
- k) Refrain from imposing internet shutdowns and from blocking digital platforms, and end arbitrary suspension of media outlets, ensuring full protection of freedom of expression and association.
- l) Ensure that all allegations of torture, other ill-treatment, enforced disappearance, unlawful killings and other human rights violations, including election-related abuses, are investigated promptly, effectively, and independently, and ensure the prosecution and sanction of those responsible, including superiors where applicable.
- m) Ensure victims' and survivors' participation in investigations and right to full reparations, including restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction, and measures of non-repetition.

INTRODUCTION

This report aims to inform the fourth cycle of the UPR by the UN Human Rights Council, to be held in October and November 2026. It examines continuing human rights concerns in Tanzania since its last UPR, including reports of ill-treatment, torture, arbitrary arrests and detentions, unlawful killings, and enforced disappearances, to persecute human rights defenders, activists, and journalists, and to silence political and social dissent. It also addresses the crackdown on protests, with particular focus on the period surrounding the 2025 elections, as well as reports of country-wide internet shutdowns and restrictions on media outlets. It explains how the police, military, and unidentified assailants have engaged in these actions without being held accountable. It highlights gaps in the State's implementation of past recommendations and outlines areas where urgent action is required.

Tanzania accepted several recommendations during its 2021 UPR, including to enhance access to justice; conduct human rights training and awareness programmes to law enforcement and other actors; conduct investigations into threats and attacks against, and killings of journalists, civil society actors, and human rights defenders; and hold perpetrators accountable and take measures to tackle impunity for human rights violations.¹

Notably, in 2021, more than 25 States recommended the ratification of UNCAT, and six States recommended the ratification of ICPPED, recommendations which were only noted by the Government of Tanzania on the basis that these “require further consultations”.² Five years later, Tanzania remains one of 21 States worldwide and one of two African countries that have not ratified UNCAT and is yet to complete ICPPED ratification.

Regarding accepted recommendations, the Tanzanian Government reported some steps to increase access to justice, including the implementation of the Judiciary Strategic Plan, expansion of court infrastructure and deployment of additional judicial personnel, and the enactment of the Legal Aid Act.³ However, these efforts have been overshadowed by ongoing human rights violations such as arbitrary arrests, torture and other ill-treatment, unlawful killings, and enforced disappearances, including during electoral periods, as well as by the continued impunity enjoyed by perpetrators, and the fear of reprisals experienced by victims and survivors which hinder their access to justice.⁴

Additionally, there is no readily available evidence to suggest that the Government has made real efforts to conduct full and impartial investigations into threats and attacks against and killings of journalists, civil society actors, and human rights defenders, and to hold perpetrators accountable.

On the contrary, as demonstrated in this submission, the situation of such actors seemed to have deteriorated, marked by repression and crackdowns on dissent and protest. The Government granted police and the military broad discretion to suppress members of opposing political parties and civil society, and credible documentation revealed widespread violations in the run-up to and aftermath of the October 2025 elections.

The Government has restricted digital rights and access to information by imposing multiple country-wide internet shutdowns before and during the 2025 October elections, despite earlier calls from civil society⁵ and international monitoring mechanisms⁶ to guarantee uninterrupted access to the internet.

This submission notes specific areas where further efforts are needed and posits that, based on the evidence, the Government has not implemented the above recommendations it accepted in 2021.

TORTURE AND OTHER VIOLATIONS TO SILENCE DISSENT

Violence against human rights defenders, activists, and others who dissent

The Tanzanian Government has subjected human rights defenders, activists, and other dissenters to threats,⁷ arbitrary arrest and unlawful detention,⁸ censorship,⁹ prosecution,¹⁰ and in some cases, sexual assault,¹¹ torture,¹² and enforced disappearances.¹³ These are not isolated acts. They are central tools of repression, often committed by State agents and military personnel against members of the political opposition, civil society individuals, and critics of the Government to silence and intimidate them.¹⁴ These violations have also progressively intensified in recent years,¹⁵ creating a hostile environment for anyone perceived as challenging State authority.

Between 2013 and 2024, the Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC) documented 513 arrests of human rights defenders.¹⁶ In 2024, it recorded 48 incidents of abductions and attacks on activists,¹⁷ and 65 arrests.¹⁸ The situation deteriorated further following the 2025 elections, with the Tanganyika Law Society (TLS) announcing plans to provide free legal aid to over 600 suspects in criminal cases arising from post-election unrest, citing concerns about torture and the denial of access to counsel.¹⁹

During the reporting period, lawyers and legal professionals are among those that have been subjected to politically motivated arrests. This is exemplified by the cases of CHADEMA Vice-Chairman Tundu Lissu²⁰ and TLS President Boniface Mwabukusi (paragraphs 21; 28).

Enforced disappearances are also frequent and seem to be part of a documented pattern whereby the police openly subject individuals to arbitrary arrests and disappearance, or unidentified individuals – allegedly law enforcement in civilian clothes – abduct civilians.²¹ Although the number of enforced disappearances vary due to the lack of an official record, the reported cases by UN bodies and civil society organisations show a widespread and alarming trend. UN experts report over 200 cases of enforced disappearance since 2019.²² According to a 2025 Report by the Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC), nearly 100 cases of abduction and enforced disappearances by unidentified individuals have taken place between 2015 and 2025, with two-thirds of these abductions between 2022 and 2024, marking a significant increase since 2021.²³

Enforced disappearances have also targeted Burundian human rights defenders and political opponents in the Nyarugusu and Nduta camps, with reports of refugees abducted at night by individuals linked to intelligence services. Victims include critics of camp conditions and forced return.²⁴ The UN refugee agency, UNHCR, has raised serious concerns about forced returns, coercive measures such as shelter demolitions, and ill-treatment. It noted that 8,000 Burundian refugees returned in one week, far exceeding the 3,000 weekly target under the November 2025 tripartite agreement.²⁵ Burundian refugees also informed our organisations of planned camp closures by Tanzanian officials (Nyarugusu by 31 March and Nduta by 30 June 2026), heightening fears of forced return to Burundi in violation of the principle of *non-refoulement*.

Torture is also well-documented in the country. In a 2024 Report, the Human Rights and Good Governance Commission in Tanzania verified multiple cases in which the police

denied bail to detainees and subjected them to torture while in custody.²⁶ The Commission revealed that the police use specific sites as “torture chambers” before arrested or detained individuals are transferred to other police stations.²⁷

At the end of 2023 and through 2024-2025, State repression escalated as the Government continued to target human rights defenders and those who spoke out in dissent ahead of general elections,²⁸ drawing increasing international scrutiny. In June 2025, several UN 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”.²⁹

Examples of this escalation include the following cases:

TLS President Boniface Mwabukusi was arrested twice in 2023 for his human rights advocacy and criticism of the Government’s port deal with the United Arab Emirates. First in July for which he was released without charge, and again in August on incitement charges, for which he was detained for several days before being released without prosecution.³⁰ Advocate Rugemeleza Nshala was likewise summoned by the Tanzania police over social media commentary on the same port deal, however, Nshala departed Tanzania without complying and did not face any charges upon his return.

In December 2023, police allegedly arrested and detained a 38-year-old man named Kalamba Ramadhani Mmenge, accusing him of a robbery he said he did not participate in. According to Mmenge, the police denied him bail, took him to a house, stripped him naked, handcuffed his arms and legs, and beat him until he was unconscious. He was later taken to the central police station in Dodoma where he was detained for three days.³¹

In December 2024, Abdul Omary Nondo, an opposition youth leader with the ACT Wazalendo party, was abducted from his home and his body later found on a beach in Der es Salaam, bearing signs of severe torture.³²

Ali Mohamed Kibao – a member of the main opposition party, Chama Cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (CHADEMA) – was found dead in September 2024 with signs of severe beating and acid burns on his body.³³

Another emblematic case in 2024 was that of 24-year-old TikToker Shadrack Chaula, who publicly burned a portrait of President Samia, was arrested, paid a fine, and once released, unidentified individuals abducted him from his home in Mbeya. Shadrack Chaula’s whereabouts remain unknown as of April 2026.³⁴

Social media activist Edgar “Sativa” Mwakabela was abducted from his home in Dar es Salaam on 23 June 2024 by individuals he identified as police officers. He was blindfolded, thrown in a vehicle, tortured, shot in the face, and left in Katavi National Park in Tanzania’s western region.³⁵ Mwakabela’s abduction and torture took place shortly after he posted online in support of a traders’ strike protesting actions by the Tanzanian Revenue Authority.³⁶

In January 2025, Maria Sarungi Tsehai, a prominent freedom of expression activist living in Kenya was abducted and assaulted by unknown assailants. It is believed that she was taken by Tanzanian security agents operating with the aim of silencing legitimate Government criticism and with the apparent intention of forcibly returning her to Tanzania.³⁷ She was released after being detained for several hours. In a statement, made via her social media, she expressed concerns over the Tanzania Government’s effort to gain access to her social media.³⁸

In April 2025, the police arrested Tundu Lissu, the leader of CHADEMA, during a rally in Mbinga town. He remains on trial on reportedly fabricated charges including the non-bailable offence of treason and of “publishing false information online” – a charge the authorities claim is based on Lissu’s alleged efforts to incite the public to obstruct the elections.³⁹ Tundu Lissu had also been arrested in September 2024 along with more than 100 youth supporters for allegedly violating a ban on holding a youth conference.⁴⁰

There are also cases of cross-border abduction attempts of human rights defenders, such as that of Maria Sarungi Tsehai (paragraph 27) and that of Mshabaha Mshabaha Hamza, a member of Change Africa Trust who suffered an attempted abduction in Nairobi on 22 February 2026: he resisted his attackers and was dumped at the Lukenya stage, drugged, and injured.⁴¹

On 19 May 2025, security authorities arrested Ugandan activist, Agather Atuhaire, and Kenyan activist, Boniface Mwangi, after they arrived in Tanzania to observe the Lissu trial. Both activists reported being held incommunicado by police who stripped them naked, beat them, and tortured them for four days before they were dumped at the borders of their respective countries.⁴² Atuhaire was also sexually assaulted by Tanzanian authorities. Instead of announcing that the State would investigate these allegations, President Samia Suluhu Hassan made remarks at a campaign rally that could be interpreted as defending the Government’s treatment of the two activists, saying “do not allow ill-mannered individuals from other countries to cross the line here.”⁴³

In October 2025, Humphrey Polepole, the former ambassador to Cuba, turned Government critic, was abducted from his home in Dar es Salaam by unidentified security forces. He resigned from public office in July 2025, expressing dissatisfaction with the CCM party leadership. He used his social media to address civic space restrictions in Tanzania. Following his enforced disappearance, there have been calls for his immediate release by organisations like Amnesty International however, to this date there is no confirmation of his whereabouts.⁴⁴ Despite UN calls in June 2025, violations persisted. In September 2025, Human Rights Watch documented 10 cases of politically motivated assault, harassment, abduction, and torture of activists.⁴⁵ Cases include:

- a) the disappearance of opposition activist Mpaluka Nyagali (“Mdude”), who was abducted from his home in Mbeye and whose whereabouts remain unknown despite a *habeas corpus* filed by his wife—; and
- b) the violent assault of Government critic Japhet Matarra, who was beaten with a metal bar by unidentified individuals until he lost consciousness. As Matarra awaited surgery in the hospital, he was attacked again by assailants posing as medical staff.⁴⁶

The cases mentioned above have a similar pattern in the profile of the victims targeted (dissenters), as well as the modus operandi, which includes arbitrary arrest, criminalisation and disappearance of dissenters, followed by an absence of or ineffective investigations.

Violence during elections and protests

In this context, Tanzania also experienced a sustained escalation in violent crackdowns on peaceful protests and restrictions on freedom of assembly.

On 23 April 2025, police in Dar es Salaam arrested several CHADEMA leaders, including the party’s Vice Chairman, to prevent a planned public rally.⁴⁷ The following day, police attempted to block protestors from gathering at the Kisutu Resident Magistrate Court

during the trial of Tundu Lissu.⁴⁸ Dozens of protesters were arrested and later reported being harassed, beaten, and subjected to torture and ill-treatment before being dumped in remote areas such as Ununio and Pande Forest, approximately 43 km from Dar es Salaam.⁴⁹ Two of those detained individuals also reported experiencing sexual assault during custody.⁵⁰

The case of Boniface Mwangi and Agather Atuhaire (paragraph 30), also happened while they were travelled to Tanzania to observe the trial of opposition leader Tundu Lissu.

On 10 June 2025, the High Court issued an injunction prohibiting CHADEMA from engaging in any political activity, effectively preventing all party members from peaceful assembly and the exercise of their political and civil rights.⁵¹

The situation deteriorated dramatically during the October 2025 elections. After two major opposition candidates – Tundu Lissu (CHADEMA) and Luhaga Mpina (ACT Wazalendo-Wazalendo) – were barred from participating in the general election, widespread protests were held across the country.⁵²

Documentation revealed that such protests were violently oppressed by State authorities, including through excessive use of force, mass arrests, and unlawful killings in Dar es Salaam, Mwanza, and Arusha.⁵³ Security forces used live ammunition and teargas to disperse demonstrations, beat protestors, denied medical care to the wounded, arrested individuals in need of treatment, and removed bodies from mortuaries to undisclosed locations.⁵⁴

Reports noted that force was used indiscriminately against protesters and bystanders. Following the election, police and unidentified armed individuals reportedly shot at protestors and bystanders, with reports of indiscriminate killings occurring immediately after the polls closed.⁵⁵ For instance, according to Deutsche Welle, police armed most likely with assault rifles, confronted four men who were eating lunch behind their home on Election Day; after ordering them to lie down, police shot and killed all four.⁵⁶

The UN OHCHR also expressed concern about reports that security forces killed hundreds of protestors, detained an unknown number of individuals, and transported the bodies of some of those killed to undisclosed locations in an attempt to conceal evidence.⁵⁷

Video footage of the five-day period surrounding the elections, verified by the BBC and CNN, showed dead bodies on the streets and piled up outside a hospital.⁵⁸ A doctor interviewed by CNN in Mwanza stated that the police brought bodies to the morgue “until it was full.”⁵⁹ Many of the victims who were killed or injured were young men, all of whom sustained gunshot wounds.⁶⁰ In one video of the protests in Arusha, Tanzanian police appear to shoot two protestors who are not threatening them, including a pregnant woman, who was shot in the back, and a young man, who appears to be shot in the head.⁶¹

A coalition of 40 African human rights and feminist organisations alleged the death toll may have reached 3,000.⁶²

Official election observation reports like the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Electoral Observation Mission Report⁶³ confirmed incidents of violence during voting, closing and counting processes at some polling stations in Mbeya, Dodoma, Arusha and Dar es Salam where police fired arms at civilians. The SADC Mission reported that most of the observers could not observe closing and counting due to the incidents and threats of violence within these areas. Similarly, The African Union Election

Observation Mission (AUEOM) noted a breakdown of observation capacity due to outbreaks of violence at some polling stations. The preliminary report explicitly confirmed loss of life and encouraged transparent investigations to ensure justice for those affected by the deadly protests.⁶⁴

These reports and documentation clearly indicate that State force was used during protests in breach of international principles of legality, necessity, proportionality, and accountability⁶⁵, and that the State failed to uphold its obligations to respect, protect, and fulfil human rights.

Internet shutdowns and other restrictions on expression

While these violations occurred, the Government imposed a nationwide internet shutdown beginning on Election Day, which lasted for four days. According to a report by the advocacy group Tech & Media Convergence, the internet shutdown was the result of a “sophisticated, multi-layered attack on the information ecosystem,” predominantly by the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA).⁶⁶ This limited access to information related to voting and the ensuing protests, impeded communication among journalists, and between civil society organisations and voters, as the authorities completely shut down public access to platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, X, WhatsApp, and Telegram.⁶⁷

According to the AUEOM, restrictions on online platforms and internet shutdowns led to voter education challenges thereby preventing meaningful citizen participation before and during the election. The dissemination of pre-election voter education messages was severely impacted by online restrictions and the total internet shutdown affected citizen access to information as well as election observers’ ability to fully observe and report on crucial elements.⁶⁸ The East African Community Election Observation Mission similarly reported on disruptions of internet connectivity and communication which affected the Mission’s ability and timeliness in finalising the compilation and analysis of the reports from the observers.⁶⁹

This also hindered public access to information of citizens, documentation of human rights violations, and prevented full visibility and international scrutiny as the Government cracked down on its citizens.

This was the third time the Tanzanian Government limited or completely shut down public access to the internet in the country in less than a year,⁷⁰ despite blanket internet disruptions and shutdowns being incompatible with the right to freedom of expression, as recognised by international bodies.⁷¹

Other serious restrictions were also imposed on freedom of expression, including through the suspension of independent media outlets⁷², or shutting down discussion forums and social media accounts of those publishing content critical of the Government.⁷³

For instance, in October 2024, the TCRA issued 30-day suspensions to three of the country’s leading newspapers, *The Citizen*, *Mwananchi*, and *Mwanaspoti*, after the outlets published an animation criticising President Samia.⁷⁴

In September 2025, a popular online discussion forum called JamiiForums was banned in the country, and in early October, the use of Virtual Private Networks was criminalised.⁷⁵ The TCRA banned JamiiForums for 90 days, stating that the website published defamatory and demeaning content about the Government and the President.⁷⁶

Meta's Transparency report also indicates that in 2025, the TCRA requested restrictions to three Instagram accounts for allegedly violating the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania (1977), and several laws, including the Cyber Crimes Act (2025), the Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) Regulations 2020, the Penal Code Cap. 16 R.E. 2022, the Media Services Act 2016, the National Security Act Cap 7, the Law of the Child Act Cap. 13 R. E. 2019 and the Personal Data Protection Act (2022). Subsequently, two items were removed for violating community standards and one item was temporarily restricted in response to these regulatory demands.⁷⁷

Online activists' voices such as Maria Tsehai and Mange Kibambi, known for sharing political opinions and documenting events, were silenced through the restriction of their accounts by Meta, which claimed to be following a request from the TCRA. Mange Kibambi, a longstanding critic of the Government was accused of inciting election protests by directing citizens through social media through the information she shared.⁷⁸

The Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC) has since filed a case at the East African Court of Justice (EACJ), challenging the suspension of internet services by the Government. Aside from seeking a declaration of violation of the East African Community Treaty (EAC), the petition also seeks an order preventing the imposition of internet shutdowns without lawful justification or a valid court order.⁷⁹

Notably, the EACJ previously ruled in March 2019 that several provisions of the Media Services Act 2016 violated the EAC Treaty and subsequent amendments were made to curb Government powers over media content, however these provisions were only minimally remedied and therefore Government was still able to curb digital censorship during elections.

Attacks on journalists were also reported. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), three Tanzanian journalists were killed on Election Day in the country.⁸⁰ Although CPJ could not verify the circumstances surrounding their deaths, they occurred amid severe violence and repression that the Government inflicted on journalists during this period.⁸¹ Reports suggest that the Government intentionally limited foreign press access to the elections, as three international outlets reported that their accreditation applications were rejected.⁸² According to Constitutional and Legal Affairs Minister, Juma Homera, 2,045 people were arrested during the election period, some of whom were journalists attempting to report on the chaos. One Kenyan journalist, Shoku Juma, was arrested and detained by plainclothes officers, who accused him of being a spy.⁸³

In January 2026, Tanzanian authorities announced plans to crack down on news outlets after the Government learned of journalists reporting on the country without proper authorisation.⁸⁴ The broad, discretionary powers exercised by regulatory authorities have produced a chilling effect on independent journalism and public debate.

LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Survivors, victims, and their relatives in Tanzania have openly stated that there is no meaningful accountability for violations they endured, and that impunity remains prevalent.⁸⁵ According to a THRDC report entitled *Situation Report on Human Rights Defenders & Civic Space in Tanzania 2024*, the State has made "no significant efforts of

legislation [or] take[n] effective measures to end the numerous and violent attacks against defenders and activists.”⁸⁶ Under the Tanzanian Constitution, the country’s Police Force is responsible for investigating, arresting, detaining, and collecting evidence for prosecuting criminal suspects.⁸⁷ However, multiple reports detail instances of arbitrary arrests and detentions, enforced disappearances, and torture committed by the police with little accountability from 2021 through the 2025 election period.⁸⁸

Shortly after President Samia assumed office in 2021, Human Rights Watch documented that the police continued to commit abuses with impunity, particularly targeting critics and members of the political opposition.⁸⁹ In 2023, the LHRC recorded a marked increase in the rates of enforced disappearances and attacks on civil society actors, and that this violence was perpetrated by police or by unidentified individuals.⁹⁰ The report also explains that the authorities failed to conduct adequate investigations or hold perpetrators accountable.⁹¹ Although courts and political actors have repeatedly called for impartial inquiries, the State has not established accountability mechanisms capable of resolving these cases.⁹²

2024 was marked by further instances of arrests and killings that appeared to occur with impunity. Indeed, no progress has been made in the investigation of the abduction and murder of high-profile CHADEMA Secretariat member Ali Mohamed Kibao in September 2024, despite President Samia calling for an investigation into his murder.⁹³ CHADEMA party leaders, including Freeman Mbowe and John Mnyika, publicly demanded that President Samia create an independent judicial committee to investigate the incident, as Mbowe claimed that police were among the suspects in the case and could not properly investigate themselves.⁹⁴ To date, no such independent investigatory mechanism has been created.

The Chanzo documented multiple instances in which individuals were abducted by people identifying themselves as police officers, followed by the police denying their involvement, stalled investigations, and an absence of accountability. In the case of CHADEMA youth leader, Aman Manengelo, who was abducted by assailants who claimed to be police, regional authorities stated that they were “looking into it,” yet no subsequent arrests or investigation outcomes were reported.⁹⁵ Similar unresolved cases include the disappearances of Deusdedith Soka, Jacob Mlay, and Dioniz Kipanya.⁹⁶ Soka and Mlay – both CHADEMA party leaders in Temeke – were abducted in August 2024 after Soka was called to the Chang’ombe Police Station to check in on his stolen motorcycle.⁹⁷ The High Court ordered the police to investigate their whereabouts, yet to date, there is no indication that the police have located them, identified suspects, or announced any findings of their investigation.⁹⁸

Dioniz Kipanya, a CHADEMA official from Sumbawanga, also remains missing after he left home on 26 July 2024 following a phone call with an unidentified person. There have been no arrests nor public statements regarding an investigation into Kipanya’s disappearance.⁹⁹ Another case involved a CHADEMA member named Kombo Twaha Mbwana, who went missing for 29 days after he was abducted from his home in July

2024. For almost a month, his family searched for him in nearby police stations, but the police denied holding him in custody. Only after 29 days did the police admit that he was being held due to a social media “abuse”, despite the individuals who came to his home stating at the time of his abduction that he was being charged with living illegally on his land.¹⁰⁰ Several legal experts in Tanzania spoke publicly on this incident, arguing that Kombo’s month-long detention was arbitrary, as the Criminal Procedure Act provides that a suspect must be released or produced to a court within 24 hours of their arrest.¹⁰¹ Speaking publicly about this case as well as the uptick in enforced disappearances in 2024, Advocate Alphonse Lusako, a human rights lawyer in Tanzania, noted that he “had thought these incidents were happening outside the security apparatus, and the police were there to help”, but that he had now “learned that [Kombo] was taken by the police, meaning there are criminals in the police force.”¹⁰² The Police Commander in Dar es Salaam stated publicly that the police were investigating the Kombo case, but as of 2026, no arrests have been made.¹⁰³

Further, *The Chanzo’s* 19 June 2025 briefing highlighted widespread public concern over other disappearances where police officers themselves were accused of involvement, yet authorities responded by attributing many cases to staged events or personal motives and did not announce any prosecutions, investigations, or disciplinary measures.¹⁰⁴ Although police repeatedly asserted that they are “investigating” these incidents, the publicly available reporting shows no evidence of conclusive findings, accountability, or arrests linked to the alleged investigations. These facts appear to reinforce a broader perception among the public that these abductions occur with impunity and without meaningful follow-through by the authorities.¹⁰⁵

In interviews conducted by Amnesty International with survivors of the October–November 2025 post-election crackdown and relatives of those killed, many described how authorities offered no explanation for disappearances and other violations, leaving families without answers, justice, or redress.¹⁰⁶

Despite repeated calls by national and international organisations for transparent accountability for electoral violence, the Government has shown limited progress in ensuring effective investigations into these allegations. On 14 November 2025, President Samia announced a Commission of Inquiry into the post-election unrest, but aspects of its mandate have drawn criticism from human rights groups. Human Rights Watch noted that the terms of the Commission do not clearly require investigations into the root causes of the crisis nor do they include independent participants such as civil society representatives, international observers, survivors, or victims’ families.¹⁰⁷ The inclusion of former senior State officials in the Commission, including a retired Inspector General of Police and a former Defence Minister, has raised concerns about bias in the Commission’s composition, raising questions about its independence.¹⁰⁸ The President’s remarks directing the Commission to investigate anyone who might have “paid” protesters to demonstrate further undermined confidence in the Commission’s impartiality.¹⁰⁹

Since 2021, accountability for police abuses in Tanzania remains severely undermined by a combination of political interference and structural conflicts of interest, enabling police impunity. Independent monitors have found that police and security agencies are responsible or suspected to be involved in enforced disappearances and torture, yet accountability mechanisms either failed to function properly, or they lacked the independence necessary to investigate their own institutions.¹¹⁰ Further, the culture of impunity is deeply entrenched in Tanzania, as recent history includes multiple examples of the leading political party imprisoning opposition politicians and activists with fabricated or trumped-up charges. For example, in the early days of President Samia's administration, Freeman Mbowe, the opposition leader, was arrested and charged with terrorism offences. Mbowe spent eight months in jail and was only released due to a combination of political pressure and a failure by the police to find any evidence.¹¹¹ Compounding this culture is a climate of fear and retaliation, as victims' families, lawyers, and witnesses often avoid engaging in formal justice institutions due to mistrust and a fear of reprisals. Indeed, the Kibao family publicly stated that they did not feel safe approaching the police after they learned of his murder. Together, these factors continue to contribute to law enforcement officials enjoying near total impunity in Tanzania.

CONCLUSION

There is an urgent need for UN Member States to adopt stronger, more targeted recommendations to Tanzania, to increase international scrutiny and ensure Tanzania ends violations, provides justice for survivors, and upholds its human rights obligations.

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