



LEGAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS CENTRE

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PRESS RELEASE

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY 2025 – "OUR EVERYDAY ESSENTIALS"

10 December 2025

Every 10th December, the world commemorates Human Rights Day to recognize the importance of rights for all people. This day was established after the United Nations General Assembly adopted the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights-UDHR (1948)**. Commemorations take place through various activities such as conferences, discussions, legal services and media briefings.

Tanzania recognizes the UDHR as an important guide for protecting human rights, and it has been incorporated into the 1977 Constitution under Article 9(f). Following the declaration, *the United Nations adopted two international covenants in 1966: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)*. Tanzania has ratified these covenants, making them part of national law. While this year's global theme is '**Our Everyday Essentials**', commemorating this important day, our focus is on the state of human rights in Tanzania for the year 2025.

From time to time, Tanzania has experienced fluctuations in the protection of human rights depending on the political, economic, and social contexts. Initially, the Sixth Phase Government embraced the 4R philosophy (Reconciliation, Resilience and Political tolerance). As a result, it was ranked by the Chandler Good Governance Index 2025 as one of the countries that made significant improvements in good governance. In addition, the 2025/2026 Budget Speech by the Ministry of Constitution and Legal Affairs emphasized the commitment to strengthen human rights through the implementation of international and regional human rights treaties and obligations.

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Despite notable developments, the year 2025 has presented major human rights challenges, especially before, during, and after the general election of October 2025. Several reports have documented violations of human rights, including killings of civilians, arbitrary arrests and denial of bail for bailable offenses, abductions and enforced disappearances, fabricated charges, suppression of media freedom, internet shutdowns and limitations to freedom of worship.

1. Arrests of Government Critics, Opposition Leaders and Human Rights Defenders

Despite the existence of Article 18 of the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania (1977), which guarantees the right to freedom of expression, the year 2025 witnessed arbitrary and unlawful arrests of individuals perceived to hold dissenting opinions against the Government, particularly members of opposition political parties and human rights defenders.

Many critics were arrested by state security organs and detained for prolonged periods without being granted bail, contrary to Article 13(6)(a) of the Constitution. These arrests intensified during the period preceding and following the General Election. In many instances, the charges against arrested individuals were not clearly disclosed by the police.

In some cases, arrests were conducted through night-time raids on private residences, heightening public fear and reinforcing concerns related to abductions. Such arrest procedures are inconsistent with international human rights standards, the Criminal Procedure Act, Chapter 20 (Revised Edition 2025), and the Police General Orders (PGOs), which require professionalism and strict adherence to human rights principles in law enforcement.

2. Abductions and Enforced Disappearances.

There have been persistent reports of abductions and enforced disappearances, often accompanied by unusual silence from authorities mandated with the protection and security of citizens. Notably, senior Government officials, including Ministers responsible for internal affairs, the Government Chief Spokesperson, national leaders, and the Police Force, have at different times acknowledged the occurrence of such incidents.

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These cases have targeted politicians, activists, journalists, and other individuals, with the reasons for their abduction or disappearance remaining unclear. In many cases, such incidents have been linked to state security agencies. The disappearances of Daniel Nchonchorio, a CCM National Congress delegate from Mwanza, Siza Kaheta, a former CCM councillorship aspirant in Tarime, and the reported abduction of Ambassador Humphrey Polepole on the night of 7 October 2025, have heightened public concern.

In 2025 alone, over 40 abduction cases were officially confirmed by the Police through public statements. While some abductees were later confirmed to be in police custody, several cases reported by families remain unaccounted for, with the whereabouts of the victims still unknown.

3. Killings of Civilians allegedly linked to State agents

Throughout 2025, reports emerged of civilian killings allegedly associated with the excessive use of force by state agents, in violation of national laws, Police operational guidelines, and international human rights standards. Other state agencies implicated include the Tanzania Forest Services (TFS) and the Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority (TAWA).

Some deaths were officially confirmed by the Police, while others, though unacknowledged, have been attributed by families to state agents. Illustrative cases include the alleged killing of a young man in Tabata Police Station, Dar es Salaam, and the killing of Emmanuel Lucas Chacha in Serengeti District, allegedly involving two officers from Tabora B Prison.

During and after the 29 October 2025 General Election, several unarmed civilians, particularly youths, were reportedly killed during demonstrations. Although precise figures remain unavailable, Government officials publicly acknowledged that the election period resulted in loss of life. Reports further indicated that some victims were killed while at their homes and were not involved in protests, causing immense trauma to families, many of whom complained of being denied the bodies of their loved ones for burial.

4. Prosecution of Government Critics, Including Charges of Treason

Under Article 28(4) of the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania (1977) and Section 39 of the Penal Code, treason is the most serious criminal

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offence in Tanzania. Historically, it has been extremely rare for this charge to be instituted due to its serious constitutional implications.

However, in 2025, treason charges were increasingly used as a tool to silence Government critics, despite being non-bailable offences. In April 2025, opposition leader Hon. Tundu Lissu was arrested while on a party rally in Mbinga District, transferred to Dar es Salaam, and charged with treason. During the proceedings of his case, the Police repeatedly used force against unarmed civilians gathered at court premises to follow-up on the proceedings.

Additional violations linked to this case included the denial of entry and deportation of Kenyan advocate Ms. Martha Karua and her colleagues, as well as the abduction, torture, and abandonment of Ms. Agather Atuhaire and Mr. Boniface Mwangi, who were later found at their respective national borders in distressing conditions.

Beyond the treason case, hundreds of citizens, particularly youths, were arrested in connection with the 29 October demonstrations and charged with offences including treason, armed robbery, rioting, arson, and malicious damage to property. Of the 2,045 individuals arrested, approximately 900 were charged with serious criminal offences. LHRC, in collaboration with the Tanganyika Law Society (TLS) and THRDC, provided legal representation and conducted custodial visits. As of the latest information, 1,151 detainees have been released.

5. Suppression of Freedom of expression and Media Freedom

The year 2025 also recorded systematic violations of freedom of expression, including warnings issued to media outlets and suspension of media platforms. In September 2025, the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA) suspended JamiiForums for 90 days over alleged content-related violations.

Additionally, journalists operating online television platforms were arrested and detained for allegedly operating without licenses. Social media users critical of the Government were also arrested under cybercrime laws. LHRC reiterates that freedom of expression is constitutionally protected under Article 18 of the Constitution and under international and regional human rights instruments to which Tanzania is a State Party.

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6. Internet Shutdowns

On 29 October 2025, Tanzanian authorities shut down internet services without providing justification, resulting in a serious violation of the right to access information, contrary to Article 18 of the Constitution (1977) and Tanzania's international obligations.

Beyond election-day shutdowns, authorities have continued to restrict access to platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Clubhouse, Telegram, and TikTok, effectively limiting citizens' access to information, despite the Government's continued use of some of these platforms for official communication.

7. Freedom of Worship

The right to freedom of worship has also faced significant challenges. Incidents include the closure of the Ufufuo na Uzima Church without adequate legal justification, attacks against religious leaders, and statements encouraging religious divisions have been noted. These violations threaten national unity and undermine constitutional guarantees protecting freedom of religion.

OUR CALL

As the world commemorates International Human Rights Day 2025 under the theme *"Our Everyday Essentials,"* LHRC reiterates its solid commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights and good governance in Tanzania.

Accordingly, LHRC calls upon the Government to:

- Ratify the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2003),
- Ratify the Convention Against Torture (1984),
- Release all individuals held unlawfully and ensure those with credible charges are brought before courts,
- Initiate the process for a new constitution without delay,

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- Hold accountable all officials involved in human rights violations during and after the elections,
- Protect freedom of expression, access to information, and media independence, ensuring the safety of journalists and media houses,
- Reform criminal laws to eliminate loopholes that allow arbitrary detention without judicial oversight, and
- Guarantee freedom of worship while eliminating acts of religious discrimination.

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