



# Legal and Human Rights Centre



## GREETINGS FROM LHRC

### *Greetings and Happy New Year 2025!*

The Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC) is happy to welcome you to the first edition of Mlinzi wa Haki Newsletter for the year 2025. With the dedicated efforts of our staff and the generous support of our development partners, including the embassies of Sweden, Norway, and Ireland, LHRC is pleased to bring before you January 2025 interventions and engagements.

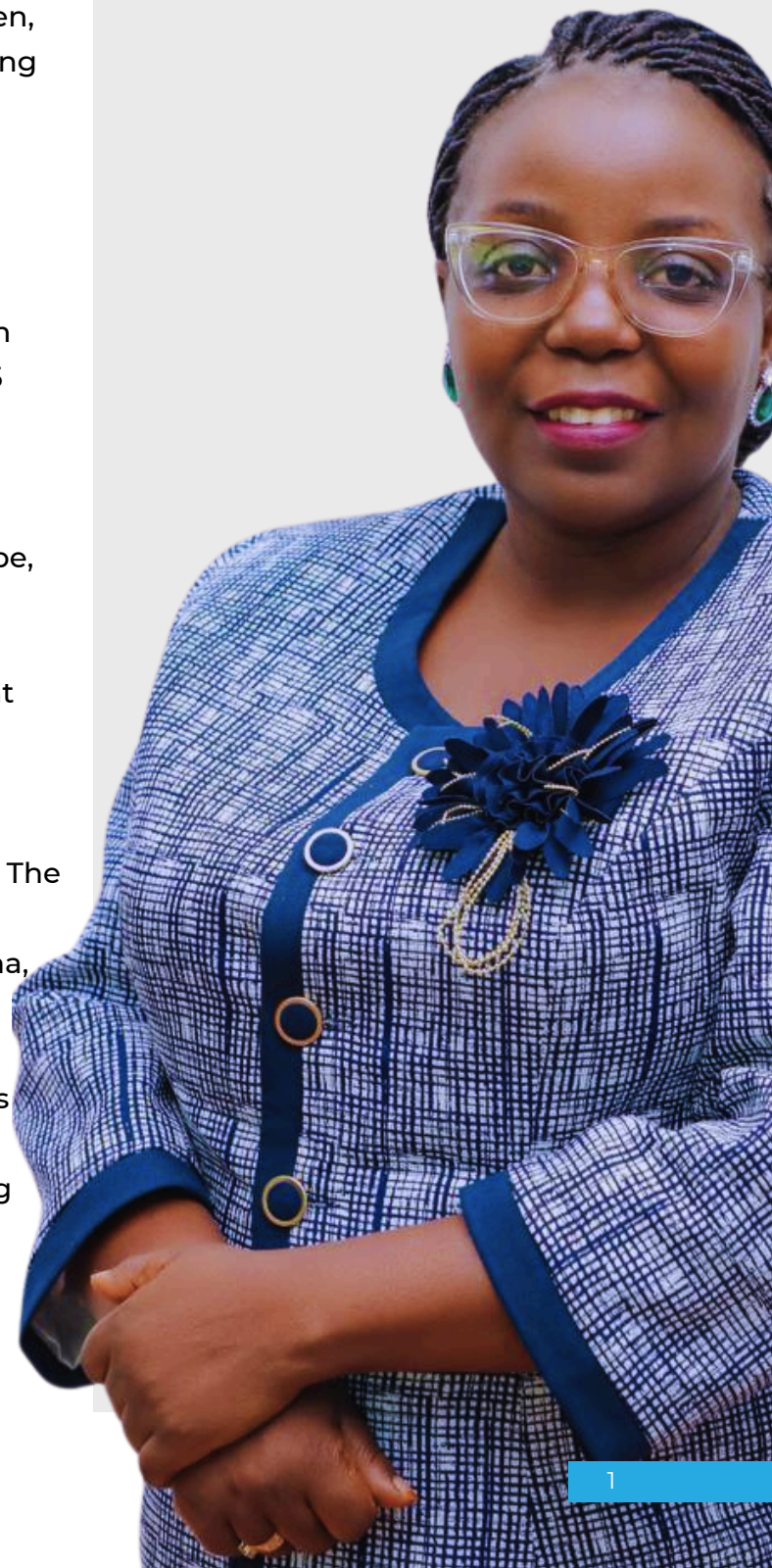
January 2025 started with sessions for the team to plan and orient itself with the new strategic plan (2025-2030), Operational Plan (2025-2027) and the Annual work plan 2025 ready for kickstarting implementation.

Ahead of the 2025 general elections, LHRC deployed observers in the regions of Njombe, Songwe, Rukwa, Ruvuma, Songea, Nyasa, Mbinga, Lindi, and Mtwara to observe registration and updating of the permanent voters' register.

Additionally, LHRC hosted several visitors, including partners and university students. The organization also took part in National Law Week 2025 commemorations held in Arusha, Dodoma, and Dar es Salaam.

We invite you to explore updates on LHRC's ongoing initiatives and gain a deeper understanding of the important work being carried out.

***Dr. Anna Henga (Advocate)***  
***LHRC Executive Director***



## Joseph Moses Oleshangay: Leading the Fight for Maasai Land Rights in Tanzania.

Human rights lawyer Joseph Moses Oleshangay has emerged as one of the most vocal defenders of the rights of the Maasai people in Tanzania, following renewed government efforts to demarcate land in the Loliondo ward, Ngorongoro District, as a wildlife sanctuary.

As semi-nomadic pastoralists, the Maasai living in the affected areas rely on subsistence cattle herding for their livelihoods. The government's attempts to evict them represent what Oleshangay calls a grave injustice—one he is determined to challenge through the courts and international advocacy. He argues that, in its bid to capitalize on tourism and attract foreign direct investment (FDI), the government is trampling on the rights of the Maasai, his people.

“Traditional Maasai villages have been raided, cattle confiscated, and those who have dared to resist police actions have been shot and killed. Those who oppose relocation face constant threats,” he told the media.

Since 2022, Oleshangay has lodged 14 cases related to the displacement issue in court, securing favorable judgments against the evictions on three occasions. “But almost all of these court decisions have been disregarded,” he says.

Despite these challenges, Oleshangay remains as determined as ever. He has engaged both the German and EU parliaments to galvanize international support. His relentless fight continues to inspire many human rights defenders, earning him the Weimar Human Rights Award in 2023.



Advocate Joseph Moses Oleshangay

## LHRC Staff Orientation Programme.

In January 2025, LHRC held a strategic planning and operational review session for its staff. The goal was to ensure that everyone had a clear understanding of key organizational documents—namely, the Strategic Plan, Operational Plan, and the 2025 Annual Work Plan.

The session was designed not just to inform but to engage staff in meaningful discussions about these critical documents. Through interactive presentations, team discussions, and group exercises, staff members had the opportunity to explore the purpose and content of each plan. The session also served as a platform for staff to share their interpretations, ask questions, and identify any areas where further clarification was needed.

A key highlight of the session was the roundtable discussions, where staff exchanged insights, provided feedback, and worked collaboratively to deepen their understanding of LHRC's strategic direction. By the end of the session, there was a stronger sense of alignment and a shared commitment to implementing the organization's plans effectively.



## Strengthening Collaborations with the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR).

On January 10, 2025, Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC) had the honor of hosting Mette Thygesen, the International Director of the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR). This visit served as a valuable platform for mutual learning, knowledge exchange, and strategic discussions on advancing human rights initiatives in Tanzania.



The timing of Thygesen's visit aligns with the new collaboration between LHRC and DIHR, focusing on enhancing the rights and participation of small-scale fishers in the management of marine resources in mainland Tanzania. This partnership will see LHRC developing a background analysis on small-scale fishers' access to and co-management of marine resources, contributing to broader efforts to ensure sustainable and inclusive marine governance.

Significantly, the Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance (CHRAGG) is also engaged in this collaboration, bringing additional expertise and institutional backing to the initiative. This partnership marks a crucial step in strengthening legal and policy frameworks to protect the livelihoods and rights of fishing communities in Tanzania.



As the collaboration progresses, LHRC, DIHR, and CHRAGG remain committed to fostering inclusive and rights-based approaches to marine resource management, ensuring that marginalized communities, particularly small-scale fishers, have a voice in decisions affecting their lives and livelihoods.



Mette Thygesen, International Director of the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR) (center), and Deogratius Bwire, Director of Empowerment and Human Rights Response (left) at LHRC, as well as a member of the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) sector in Tanzania.

## Partnership with BBC Media Action to improve civic space and community engagements.

Anna Bwana, the Country Director of BBC Media Action Tanzania, along with her delegates, paid a courtesy visit to the Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC) headquarters in Kijitonyama today, January 16, 2025.

The meeting, led by LHRC's Executive Director, Dr. Anna Henga, included discussions on various areas of collaboration following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at the end of last year.

The purpose of MoU is for the parties to agree to cooperate in various areas, including but not limited to media development and engagement, civic space support, community outreach, and climate action. Additionally, LHRC and BBC Media Action partnered and collaborated during the 2024 local government elections.



BBC Media Action Tanzania team met with LHRC Executive Director Dr. Anna Henga, along with the Director of Empowerment and Human Rights Response at LHRC, for a partnership meeting.





## EU Special Representative Johan Borgstam visits LHRC to discuss human rights and democracy in Tanzania.

The European Union Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region, Johan Borgstam, along with delegates from the European Union to Tanzania, paid a courtesy visit to the Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC) headquarters in Kijitonyama on January 16, 2025.

The meeting was led by Dr. Anna Henga, the Executive Director of LHRC. Discussions focused on the general human rights situation in the country, elections, peace and democracy, women's rights, land rights, and the rights of refugees, along with related interventions.

As part of ongoing regional engagements, the European Union Special Representative, Johan Borgstam, will hold high-level discussions with the Minister of Defence, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, and prominent members of the diplomatic community, academia, and civil society in Tanzania.

His visit aimed to facilitate discussions on Tanzania's role in the Great Lakes region and reaffirm the EU's commitment to peace, stability, and security in the region through the EU Great Lakes Strategy. As the EU Special Representative, Johan Borgstam is particularly focused on exploring East and Southern African regional integration, considering its economic, political, and peace and security dimensions.



European Union Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region, Johan Borgstam (left), and LHRC Executive Director, Dr. Anna Henga (right), during a meeting at LHRC headquarters in Kijitonyama.



Delegates from the European Union visited LHRC's headquarters in Kijitonyama for an insightful meeting.

## Ruaha Catholic University students explore human rights advocacy and legal aid at LHRC.

Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC) was visited today, January 17, 2025, by students from Ruaha Catholic University (RUCU) in Iringa Region.

The students came to learn about how the Centre operates and the methods used to reach the community.



They also commended the Centre for using media platforms to provide education on human rights issues, an initiative that has helped to educate and reach a wider audience.

Additionally, they applauded the Centre for offering free legal aid services at no cost.



Students from Ruaha Catholic University with the LHRC team during an insightful meeting, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange.

## Condemning the abduction of Tanzanian activist Maria Sarungi Tsehai.

In January 2025, prominent Tanzanian activist Maria Sarungi Tsehai was abducted by armed men in Kenya and released several hours later. Four unidentified assailants forced her into a vehicle in Kenya's capital, Nairobi, on Sunday afternoon, raising serious concerns about the safety of human rights defenders in the region.

Maria Sarungi Tsehai fled to Kenya in 2020, seeking asylum after facing increasing threats under the government of the late President John Magufuli. Her abduction is a stark reminder of the challenges activists continue to face in their fight for justice and human rights.

As an organization dedicated to safeguarding human rights, ensuring accountability, and promoting a just and equitable society, Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC) was deeply concerned about this alarming incident. Reports indicate that she was taken from Chaka Place in Kilimani, Nairobi, Kenya. LHRC strongly condemns such acts of intimidation and violence against activists in East Africa and remains committed to closely monitoring these incidents while advocating for the protection of human rights defenders.



Maria Sarungi Tsehai.

## **LHRC is urging the parliamentary committee to amend labor laws, advocating for special maternity leave for mothers of premature babies.**

On January 15, 2025, Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC) successfully submitted its recommendations to the Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Social Welfare and Community Development. The submission addressed the Labour Laws (Amendments) Act, 2024, specifically focusing on the proposed amendments to the Employment and Labour Relations Act (CAP 366) and the Labour Institutions Act (CAP 300).

One of the key milestones is the introduction of special maternity leave for mothers who give birth to premature children. This is a progressive step toward supporting the unique needs of mothers in critical circumstances, ensuring they have adequate time to recover and care for their newborns during the incubation period. Additionally, LHRC urged the committee to expand this provision to cover other medical conditions that may require a mother to remain in the hospital after birth, based on the recommendation of a medical doctor.



Advocate Hiday Haonga from LHRC (left) during a parliamentary meeting in Dodoma.

## LHRC participated in National Law Week 2025, offering legal aid.

Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC) participated in the launch of National Law Week at Nyerere Square in Dodoma, with former President Dr. Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete as the guest of honor. LHRC also took part in the celebrations at Mnazi Mmoja Grounds in Dar es Salaam and at the TBA in Arusha.

As part of the week-long commemoration from January 25 to February 1, 2025, LHRC provided legal aid services to the public. During the event, LHRC's booth was visited by Senior Assistant Commissioner of Prisons, CP Nicodemus M. Tenga, who was keen to learn how LHRC reaches out to special groups in society, including women, children, and persons with disabilities (PWDs). Mr. Raymond Kanegene, Advocacy and Reforms Manager, shared that LHRC connects with these groups through community radio programs and mobile legal aid clinics.



Raymond Kanegene, Advocacy and Reforms Manager at LHRC, proudly receiving a Certificate of Participation for his contributions during National Law Week in Dodoma, presented by Hon. Eva Nkya, Chief Registrar of the Judiciary of Tanzania.



On February 3, the National Law Day Commemoration took place at Chinangali Grounds in Dodoma.

Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Constitution and Legal Affairs, Mr. Eliakim Maswi, visited the LHRC booth during the National Law Week commemoration at Nyerere Square. He inquired about the methods LHRC uses to provide legal education to the public and the challenges the organization faces in delivering legal aid services. He was briefed on how LHRC adheres to the laws and regulations of the country.

Chief Registrar of the Judiciary of Tanzania, Hon. Eva Nkya, presented LHRC with a certificate of participation for its contributions during National Law Week. LHRC was able to provide legal aid services to over 100 people at Nyerere Square in Dodoma.



Legal Officer Euphrasia Peragius of the LHRC provides legal aid to Zanzibar's High Court Administrator, Kai Mbarouk, during the Law Week commemoration in Dodoma.

Throughout the week, LHRC has also strengthened its collaboration with various stakeholders, including the Law Reform Commission and the Judicial Service Commission.

This year's Law Day theme was **"Tanzania 2050: The role of institutions that oversee justice in achieving the goals of the national development vision."**



Arusha team in action during Law Week 2025 at TBA, Arusha, showcasing their dedication and commitment to justice.

## Celebrating Irish St. Brigid Day at the legal aid clinic in Kinondoni with Hon. Frances Fitzgerald.

Hon. Frances Fitzgerald, a senior Irish politician, along with delegates from the Embassy of Ireland in Tanzania, visited the LHRC Legal Aid Clinic in Kinondoni on 29th January 2025 as part of her official engagements in Tanzania ahead of the Irish St. Brigid Day commemorations.

Fitzgerald and the delegates toured the legal aid clinic, participated in a roundtable discussion, and briefly engaged with key civil society leaders working on legal aid and access to justice from UNDP and WILDAF.

The discussion focused mainly on the existing legal and policy gaps in ensuring gender equality, particularly women's rights, where LHRC, WILDAF, and UNDP shared their experiences and contributions in addressing these challenges.



During the discussions, Hon. Fitzgerald shared Ireland's experience in advocating for human rights and how the country's legal system ensures access to justice, while offering her insights on potential reforms that could strengthen the legal aid system in Tanzania.



Hon. Frances Fitzgerald, a senior Irish politician, alongside delegates from the Embassy of Ireland in Tanzania and key civil society leaders, during their visit to LHRC Legal Aid.

## Our development partners.



EMBASSY OF SWEDEN



Ambasáid na hÉireann  
Embassy of Ireland

# Ford Foundation



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