



Mlinzi wa Haki Newsletter

First quarter 2026 Edition

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Greetings from LHRC
Esteemed Readers,

Warm greetings from the Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC). We are pleased to present the First Quarter 2026 edition of the Mlinzi wa Haki Newsletter, which highlights key human rights initiatives, advocacy efforts, and legal interventions undertaken during this period.

Throughout this quarter, LHRC remained committed to promoting justice, democracy, gender equality, and human dignity across Tanzania. Our work focused on strengthening civic participation through engagement in Tanzania's Fourth Cycle Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, advancing the rights of women and girls during the commemoration of Women's Month, and providing legal support to individuals affected by post-election prosecutions and related human rights violations.

LHRC continues to stand alongside communities, protect constitutional freedoms, and advocate for accountability, inclusion, and equal access to justice for all.

We extend our sincere appreciation to our partners, stakeholders, development allies, and communities for their continued support, collaboration, and solidarity in advancing human rights and the rule of law in Tanzania. Together, we remain committed to building a more just, democratic, and rights-respecting society.

Dr. Anna Henga (Advocate)
Executive Director
Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC)

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**LHRC Leads Civil Society Engagement in
Tanzania's Fourth Cycle Universal Periodic
Review**

As Tanzania prepares for its Fourth Cycle Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2026, this quarter the Legal and Human

Rights Centre has taken a leading role in coordinating civil society engagement to ensure that citizens' voices, experiences, and concerns are reflected in the national human rights review process.

The Universal Periodic Review is a United Nations mechanism under the Human Rights Council that assesses the human rights records of all UN Member States every four to five years. The process provides an important platform for governments, civil society organizations, and development partners to evaluate progress made, identify persistent challenges, and recommend reforms aimed at strengthening the protection and promotion of human rights.

Recognizing the importance of inclusive participation, LHRC facilitated a series of consultations, thematic discussions, and report-writing sessions involving civil society actors from across the country. The initiative aimed to amplify community perspectives and strengthen collective advocacy around critical human rights issues affecting Tanzanians.

"This engagement strengthens collective advocacy and ensures that human rights concerns affecting different groups are well represented," Advocate Fulgence Massawe LHRC's Director of Advocacy and Access to justice".

Civil Society Thematic Groups Unite to Develop UPR Stakeholders Report

As part of preparations for Tanzania's Fourth Cycle Universal Periodic Review (UPR) submission, the Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC) and the Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC) coordinated the formation of nine thematic groups to develop the first draft stakeholders' report on key human rights issues affecting different groups in society. The meeting was held in January 2026 at Seashells Hotel in Dar es Salaam.

The thematic groups brought together representatives from various CSOs including human rights defenders, advocacy organizations, and sector experts focusing on areas such as children's rights, women's rights, civic space, political participation, and access to justice to contribute expertise and recommendations on human rights concerns in Tanzania. Through collaborative discussions and technical working sessions, participants analyzed existing challenges, identified emerging concerns, and developed recommendations for policy and legal reforms.

The consultations culminated in the drafting of thematic submissions that contributed to the Joint CSOs UPR Stakeholders Report. Beyond report preparation, the process also strengthened collaboration among civil society actors and created a unified platform for advancing human rights advocacy in Tanzania.

Participants noted that the engagement provided an opportunity to openly discuss gaps in the protection of fundamental freedoms and propose practical recommendations aimed at improving accountability, inclusion, and access to justice for all citizens.

"The formation of thematic groups is a very important first step in ensuring that all human rights challenges facing Tanzania are openly discussed from the lived realities of citizens and without being filtered at any level. This process creates a unique space for stakeholders to speak honestly and contribute credible recommendations toward improving human rights protection in the country," Advocate Fulgence Massawe, LHRC Director of Advocacy and Access to Justice.



(A group photo of stakeholders from LHRC, THRDC, Save the Children, and the Zanzibar Children's Rights Forum (ZCRF) during the validation meeting of the joint CSO report for Tanzania's 4th Cycle Universal Periodic Review (UPR), held on 11 March 2026 in Morogoro, Tanzania.)



LHRC Convenes National Validation Meeting Ahead of UPR Submission

From March 10–13, LHRC, THRDC, and Zanzibar Civil Rights Forum (ZCRF) convened a national validation meeting at Morena Hotel in Morogoro, bringing together civil society organizations, human rights advocates, and development partners to review the draft report before submission.

The validation session aimed to ensure the accuracy of information presented in the report, harmonize stakeholder inputs, and minimize duplication of recommendations. Participants reviewed key findings, discussed emerging human rights concerns, and proposed additional recommendations to strengthen the report's relevance and credibility.

The meeting also served as an important platform for reinforcing collaboration among stakeholders involved in human rights advocacy and governance reforms. Participants emphasized the importance of sustained civic engagement in ensuring that Tanzania's UPR process reflects the realities experienced by communities across the country.

Through its coordination role, LHRC continues to demonstrate its commitment to promoting inclusive participation, accountability, and the protection of human rights as Tanzania prepares for its 2026 Universal Periodic Review. *"The report writing process was inclusive and participatory. Stakeholders were divided into nine thematic groups to ensure equal representation of different sectors of society. The groups included organizations working on children's rights, women's rights, freedom of expression, disability rights, refugee rights, farmers' and pastoralists' rights, civic space, and broader human rights protection."*

Following the formation of the groups, participants agreed to collect information from various credible sources to ensure that the stakeholders' report reflects accurate, reliable, and evidence-based information," said LHRC Executive Director Dr. Anna Henga during the Stakeholders Validation Meeting of the draft UPR report held at Morena Hotel in Morogoro.



(LHRC Executive Director Dr Anna Henga speaking during the stakeholders' validation meeting of the draft UPR report, held at the Morena Hotel in Morogoro.)

Incorporating Children's Lived Experiences in Global Human Rights Advocacy.

Recognizing that children are among the groups most affected by human rights challenges, LHRC, together with child rights stakeholders, organized a special validation session from March 31 to April 1, 2026, at Edema Hotel in Morogoro, involving children's representatives from across the country through the National Children's Council. The engagement formed part of the broader consultations for the Joint Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) UPR Report and the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process.

During the consultations, children openly shared their experiences and recommendations on issues affecting their lives, including violence against children, child marriage, online abuse, inclusive education, and child protection systems. Their contributions provided firsthand perspectives on challenges faced by children in communities and schools across Tanzania.

The process not only strengthened the credibility of the reports but also created a rare platform for children to directly participate in international human rights discussions and policy advocacy processes.

"Many children today are experiencing serious violations of their rights, including sexual abuse and other forms of violence, some cases of child abuse, including rape, take too long to be investigated and resolved, leaving victims without timely justice and protection. I call for stronger child protection systems and faster justice processes to ensure that children are safeguarded, and their rights are fully respected."

Daniel, Chairperson of the National Children's Council, during the validation session of the UPR process in Morogoro



(Children from the National Children's Council pose for a group photo during the UPR and VNR consultation meeting held in Morogoro from 30 March to 1 April 2026.)



(Daniel Magembe, Chairperson of the National Children's Council and a Form Four student at Pamba Secondary School in Mwanza, officially opens the Human Rights Reports (UPR and VNR) Consultative Meeting in Morogoro on 31 March 2026)

LHRC Coordinates Submission of Key Human Rights Reports

In April 2026, L HRC coordinated the submission of three major reports contributing to Tanzania's Fourth Cycle

Universal Periodic Review process.

The submissions included the Joint Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) UPR Report, the Children's Views Report, and the Stakeholders' Submission for the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process. The reports highlighted critical human rights concerns affecting communities across the country, including restrictions on civic space, political freedoms, access to justice, violence against women and children, inclusive education, and the protection of vulnerable groups.

The reports also presented recommendations aimed at strengthening legal protections, accountability systems, and inclusive governance in Tanzania. Through the submission process, LHRC ensured that perspectives from grassroots communities, civil society organizations, children, and marginalized groups were represented in international human rights engagements.

The process marked an important milestone in strengthening collaborative human rights advocacy and increasing citizen participation in global accountability mechanisms.

Media Engagement Strengthens Awareness on Tanzania's UPR Process.

Beyond report preparation and submission, LHRC intensified media engagement efforts aimed at increasing public understanding of the UPR process and amplifying human rights concerns raised by stakeholders during consultations.

Through media dialogues, interviews, and advocacy engagements, LHRC shared key findings emerging from the report-writing process while creating awareness among journalists and several media houses, including ITV, Azam TV, Crown Media, Watetezi TV, Haki TV, Nipashe, and Mwananchi, among others, helping to amplify human rights messaging across television, print, and digital platforms on the role of the UPR mechanism in promoting accountability and protecting human rights. The awareness campaign reached an estimated audience of nearly two million people and generated active public discussions on social media, where stakeholders shared comments and opinions on key human rights concerns, particularly the importance of protecting fundamental rights, including the right to life in Tanzania.

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The organization also announced plans to convene an in-country pre-session bringing together civil society organizations, government institutions, the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI), embassies, and development partners ahead of Tanzania's official review session in Geneva.

The pre-session is expected to provide a strategic advocacy platform where civil society actors will engage directly with diplomatic missions and development partners to present priority recommendations contained in the submitted reports before the international review process begins.



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Key Recommendations Highlight Priority Human Rights Reforms

The reports coordinated by the Legal and Human Rights Centre outlined key recommendations across major human rights sectors, reflecting concerns raised by communities, civil society organizations, and stakeholders during the 2026 UPR consultations.

On women's rights, stakeholders called for the repeal of discriminatory inheritance laws under Government Notice No. 36 of 1963 or iminization of all forms of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and marital rape, enactment of a

comprehensive Anti-GBV law, and increased investment in maternal healthcare services, particularly in rural communities.

The submissions also emphasized stronger protection of children through improved child protection systems, implementation of court decisions on child marriage, guaranteed school re-entry for pregnant girls, prohibition of corporal punishment, improved birth registration systems, and stronger action against child labour in mining communities.

Recommendations on minority rights focused on strengthening protection for persons with albinism, refugees, persons with disabilities, elderly persons, and Indigenous communities through improved legal protections and inclusive policymaking processes.

On civil and political rights, stakeholders urged Tanzania to ratify the Convention against Torture, abolish the death penalty, reform restrictive media and cybercrime laws, protect freedoms of expression and assembly, and advance inclusive constitutional and electoral reforms.

The reports further called for stronger legal protection of human rights defenders, independent investigations into attacks against activists and journalists, judicial reforms, and strengthened dialogue between government and civil society organizations.

Additional recommendations highlighted the need to protect pastoralist land rights in areas such as Loliondo and Ngorongoro, while also strengthening healthcare services, digital inclusion, climate-smart agriculture, and accountability in environmental conservation and carbon trading initiatives.



LHRC Provides Legal Aid to Detainees Linked to Post-2025 General Elections Demonstrations

Following Tanzania's 2025 General Election, Legal and Human Rights Centre emerged as one of the leading organizations providing legal assistance and human rights protection to civilians arrested in connection with post-election demonstrations reported in different parts of the country.

According to documented reports, approximately 2,045 civilians were arrested facing charges that included treason, conspiracy, armed robbery, arson, riot, and destruction of property. Arrests were reported in several regions, including Dar es Salaam, Mwanza, Kilimanjaro, Mbeya, Mara, Geita, Songwe, Kigoma, Dodoma, and Ruvuma. In response, LHRC coordinated nationwide legal interventions to ensure that detainees received legal representation, fair treatment, and protection of their constitutional rights.

"We are committed to defending these young people who have been charged in these cases. Many of the charges are false and are not related to treason at all. We want to ensure that every Tanzanian receives legal representation and protection under the law, and we will not remain silent while people continue to suffer injustice."

Advocate William Maduhu, LHRC Human Rights Response Manager



LHRC Mobilizes Nationwide Legal Support for Election-Related Cases

After more than 900 accused persons were arraigned before courts in November 2025, this quarter LHRC immediately mobilized lawyers and human rights defenders from multiple regions to provide legal representation and courtroom support.

Legal teams from Dar es Salaam, Mwanza, Kilimanjaro, Arusha, Mbeya, Songwe, Mara, Shinyanga, Geita, Iringa, Kagera, Kigoma, Ruvuma, Rukwa, and Njombe coordinated responses to assist detainees facing various criminal charges.

Out of 1,284 documented accused persons, 588 faced treason-related charges while others were charged with conspiracy, armed robbery, arson, riot, and destruction of property. Through continuous legal follow-up and court representation, many cases were later withdrawn or discontinued, leading to the release of approximately 842 detainees.



Strengthening Access to Justice through Bail Follow-Ups and Prison Visits

Beyond courtroom representation, LHRC conducted continuous follow-up on police bail procedures to ensure detainees were either released on bail or presented before courts within constitutional timelines.

The organization also carried out prison visits and legal consultations in detention facilities, including Segerea Prison in Dar es Salaam, where detainees facing treason and related charges were being held.

The visits aimed to assess detainees' welfare, receive feedback regarding treatment while in custody, and follow up on allegations related to torture and denial of medical services. Through these engagements, LHRC continued to monitor human rights conditions while providing legal guidance and psychosocial support to affected individuals.

As legal proceedings continue, LHRC has reaffirmed its commitment to defending justice, protecting civic freedoms, and ensuring access to fair trial and legal representation for all detainees affected by post-election arrests.



"I was under police detention for 35 days after being arrested in Morogoro in connection with allegations linked to the 2025 General Election and later transferred to Dar es Salaam for further investigations on incitement case -related charges. I appreciate the support provided by LHRC through legal representation and continuous follow-up, which contributed to my release. I am currently free and no longer facing any charges or court proceedings." Mroso, a graduate of Mzumbe University, sharing his testimony.



Marking Women's Month through Community Action and International Advocacy

For many women and girls in Tanzania, harmful cultural practices, gender-based violence, and limited access to justice continue to threaten their safety, dignity, and equal participation in society. During the first quarter of 2026, Legal and Human Rights Centre intensified nationwide advocacy efforts as part of Women's Month commemorations, focusing on raising awareness about gender equality, survivor support, and the protection of women's and girls' rights.

Through community dialogues, media engagement, sensitization sessions, and international advocacy platforms, LHRC amplified conversations around Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), gender-based violence (GBV), and access to justice for survivors.

"At LHRC, Women's Month is not just a commemoration, but an opportunity to strengthen advocacy for women's rights, stand in solidarity with survivors of injustice, and ensure that the rights of women and girls continue to be recognized, protected, and defended."

Dr. Anna Henga, LHRC Executive Director



(Service providers from Mwananyamala and Temeke hospitals actively participate in presentations and discussions during the LHRC sensitization

session on survivor-centered GBV response.)

Strengthening Survivor-Centred Responses to Gender-Based Violence.

As part of the International Women's Day commemorations, on 5 March 2025, LHRC conducted sensitization sessions with healthcare providers from Mwananyamala and Temeke hospitals aimed at strengthening survivor-centred approaches in handling GBV cases and improving coordination through One Stop Centre services. The initiative came amid growing concerns over rising cases of violence against women in Tanzania. According to the LHRC Human Rights Report 2024, reported cases of violence against women increased from 147 cases in 2023 to 317 cases in 2024, representing a 116 percent increase.

Despite growing legal awareness and support services, many incidents of domestic violence remain underreported due to stigma, fear, and limited access to support systems. During the sessions, service providers discussed approaches for improving survivor care, confidentiality, referral pathways, and access to justice.

Community Dialogues in Kitunda Challenge Harmful FGM Practices

The 2026 commemorations of the International Women's Days focused on addressing harmful traditional practices affecting girls and women in communities where Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) remains prevalent.

In Kitunda Ward, LHRC organized community dialogue sessions bringing together traditional elders, parents, survivors, and former FGM practitioners, commonly known as Mangariba, to discuss the long-term physical, psychological, and social effects of FGM.

During the discussions, community members acknowledged that the practice still exists in some areas and emphasized the importance of continued education, community awareness, and protection of girls from harmful cultural practices.

Participants also highlighted the importance of community ownership in addressing harmful practices and promoting safer environments for women and children.



(LHRC Executive Director, Adv. Dr. Anna Henga, alongside an LHRC Programme Officer during a community dialogue held in Kitunda as part of the community awareness against FGM)



LHRC Participates in CSW70 Discussions on Women's Rights and Legal Reform in Africa

From 8 to 12 March 2026, LHRC participated in the 70th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70) held in New York, United States, where global stakeholders discussed progress on women's rights and gender equality. LHRC was represented by the Director of Empowerment and Human Rights, Advocate Deogratius Bwire who joined a side event organized by the Centre for Reproductive Rights that brought together government representatives, civil society organizations, and human rights institutions from across Africa to discuss progress and challenges in advancing women's rights through legal reform.

The discussions highlighted experiences from different African countries in combating gender-based violence, strengthening legal protections, and improving access to sexual and reproductive health services.

During the panel discussions, LHRC highlighted Tanzania's progress and ongoing challenges in implementing recommendations issued by the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child following a landmark complaint filed in 2019 by LHRC and the Centre for Reproductive Rights regarding the expulsion and denial of re-entry for pregnant schoolgirls in public schools.

The case later resulted in findings that Tanzania had violated provisions of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, leading to 14 recommendations aimed at protecting girls' right to education.

LHRC emphasized the importance of collaboration between government institutions, civil society organizations, and child rights stakeholders in implementing the recommendations and strengthening protection systems for girls and children.

Through its participation in regional and international advocacy platforms, LHRC continues to strengthen efforts aimed at advancing legal reforms, promoting gender equality, and protecting the rights of women, girls, and vulnerable communities in Tanzania.

"The decision by the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child marked an important milestone in advancing girls' right to education in Tanzania. However, the real impact of these recommendations will depend on continued commitment and practical implementation to ensure that no girl is denied access to education because of pregnancy or motherhood. Every child has the right to education, dignity, and equal opportunity."-Advocate Deogratius Bwire speaking during the CSW70 discussions in New York, United States.



(Advocate Deogratias Bwire speaking during the CSW70 meeting in New York, United States)



(Deogratias Bwire from LHRC, the second from left with partners from various African countries during the CSW side event)



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