STATEMENT ON THE UPR PRE-SESSION

UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA • GENEVA, AUGUST 2026

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, colleagues and partners,

During Tanzania's third cycle review, the Government received 31 recommendations relating to civic space (freedom of expression, freedom of association and peaceful assembly). Of these, 19 were accepted, 10 were partly accepted and 2 were noted. Within this cluster, 19 recommendations concerned freedom of expression and media freedom, while 12 concerned peaceful assembly.

Today, we highlight four priority areas:

1. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Challenge: Despite the 2023 amendment to the Media Services Act, which decriminalized defamation, restrictive provisions remain. The Cybercrimes Act criminalizes publication of "false, deceptive, misleading or inaccurate information", while the Online Content Regulations impose licensing and content-control powers. In May 2025, 5 months to the general elections, TCRA shut down more than 80,000 blogs, online platforms, social-media accounts and websites. The government said the move is meant to protect children's mental health, but it also signals a growing appetite for online censorship. Access to social media platforms (X, Clubhouse, Telegram, Signal) has also been restricted, particularly around elections. Tanzania experienced a nationwide internet blackout from 29 October to 3 November 2025, lasting approximately three to five days, during the election and its immediate aftermath.

Impact on rights-holders: These restrictions limit freedom of expression. They encourage self-censorship particularly during politically sensitive periods.

Recommendations:

i. Repeal or amend Section 16 of the Cybercrimes Act, Sections 52, 53, 54, 58 and 59 of the Media Services Act, 2016 (Cap. 229), as amended in 2023, and restrictive provisions of the Online Content Regulations to ensure compliance with freedom of expression and media freedom standards.

ii. Prohibit nationwide internet shutdowns and guarantee uninterrupted access to information during elections and any other period.

2. FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

Challenge: In August 2024, at least 375 opposition leaders, members and supporters were arrested ahead of planned political activities. In April 2025, CHADEMA was disqualified from the October 2025 elections, while an ACT-Wazalendo presidential candidate was later disqualified.

Impact on rights-holders: These restrictions weaken the ability of NGOs to operate independently and effectively, while restrictions on opposition parties reduce meaningful political participation. The right to association includes the ability of NGOs, political actors, and all citizens to operate without unwarranted state interference.

Recommendations:

iii. Amend the NGO Act, Cap. 56, and the Non-Governmental Organizations Regulations to simplify registration and compliance requirements, remove excessive administrative controls, and guarantee the freedom to operate, associate, access funding and engage in advocacy without undue interference.

iv. Immediately release opposition members, journalists and HRDs facing unlawful prosecutions and dropping false charges.

3. PROTECTION OF HRDS, JOURNALISTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIVISTS

Challenge: The Government is yet to adopt a dedicated national policy or legislation for the protection of human rights defenders. There have been 48 recorded incidents of abductions or attacks against activists,

HRDs and others were documented in 2024. Journalists have also faced arbitrary detention and assault while performing their professional duties.

Impact on rights-holders: The failure to prevent and investigate attacks creates fear, self-censorship and a chilling effect on civic action. HRDs are less able to document violations, journalists face greater risks when reporting on sensitive issues, and communities lose access to independent information and avenues for accountability.

Recommendations:

v. Conduct effective, impartial and thorough investigations into all attacks, harassment and intimidation against HRDs and journalists, and bring perpetrators to justice.

vi. Develop and implement a national Human Rights Defenders Policy/Law.

vii. Ratification of the International Convention for Protection of all Persons against enforced disappearance and its domestication in terms of policies, laws and regulations that reflect the provisions of the convention.

viii. Resume the Constitutional reform process.

4. PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY, ACCOUNTABILITY AND RULE OF LAW

Challenge: In 2023, the government lifted the ban on political rallies. Despite the lift, police continued to prohibit assemblies and even arrest politicians who attempted to conduct their political rallies. **Following the October 2025** election unrest, where there was a use of live bullets and excessive force against protesters. 518 deaths were recorded by the President's commission. However, the question as to who killed the 518 people is yet to be answered. More than 700 cases of enforced disappearances were recorded, 200 being HRDs, politicians and activists. Over 2,000 were arrested during that time.

Impact on rights-holders: Restrictions on peaceful assembly, excessive use of force and weak accountability undermine political participation and public confidence in the rule of law. Where violations are not independently investigated and victims do not receive effective remedies, the cycle of impunity is reinforced.

Recommendations:

ix. Publish the findings of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the Incidents of Violence and Breaches of Peace that Occurred During and After the October 2025 General Election

x. Immediately and unconditionally release of HRDs, journalists, politicians, and activists who were unlawfully detained in relation to the 2025 General election violations.

CLOSING

We therefore urge States to recommend that Tanzania create and maintain, in law and practice, a safe and enabling environment for civil society; protect freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly; protect HRDs and journalists from reprisals; and ensure accountability and effective remedies for violations.

Thank you.