



Statement on Human Rights Violations During the 2025 General Elections (October 29 – November 4)

1.0 Introduction

The Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC) and the Tanganyika Law Society (TLS) issue this joint statement regarding widespread human rights violations that occurred during and after the 2025 General Elections. We are deeply shocked and saddened by the scale of violence that began on October 29 and continues to this day. We have witnessed numerous young people being shot dead or seriously injured without receiving medical treatment during demonstrations, while others were hunted down in their homes. It is disheartening that these events unfolded despite earlier efforts by TLS, THRDC, and other stakeholders to push for a national consensus before the elections—efforts that were largely ignored by those on power.

THRDC and TLS strongly condemn the killings and brutalization of innocent civilians during the protests. We call upon security agencies to respect citizens' right to peaceful protest and to manage demonstrations professionally to prevent chaos and destruction. Peaceful protest is a constitutional right, and ensuring its safety is a fundamental duty of the police. We extend our heartfelt condolences to families who lost loved ones, and to all who were injured or suffered property loss during the unrest.

2.0 Incidents of Human Rights Violations

a) The General Election Context

The General Election of the United Republic of Tanzania was scheduled for October 28, 2025 (early voting in Zanzibar) and October 29, 2025, on the mainland. However, on the morning of October 29, demonstrations erupted across various parts of the country as citizens demanded free and fair elections and protested the abduction of civilians. Protesters called for electoral reforms, the protection of human rights, and true democracy. It is an undisputed fact that peaceful protest/assembly is a constitutional right under Articles 18 and 20 of the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania. These young people were exercising their legitimate right to express longstanding grievances that had gone unaddressed before the election.

b) Killings of Civilians

The protests were met with excessive force by security agencies, particularly the police, who used live ammunition and tear gas to disperse crowds. This resulted in the shocking killing of many innocent civilians. Although the exact number of deaths remains unconfirmed, our observation and various sources indicate that hundreds—mostly youth—have been killed, injured, or arbitrarily arrested. These incidents have been reported in several regions, including Dar es Salaam, Mwanza, Mbeya, Arusha, Songwe, Geita, Mara, Shinyanga, and towns such as Tunduma, Katoro, Kahama, and Tarime. Such actions have tainted our nation's reputation both domestically and internationally.

We have verified reports of people—especially young men—being shot, some during protests and others while at home or engaged in daily activities. Bodies of victims were seen scattered in several areas before being taken to hospitals. Some victims died due to lack of medical care, while others treated themselves at home. Among the victims were lawyers and journalists—some killed while on duty, others at home. Parents have been searching for the bodies of their missing children to give them proper burials. We emphasize that families must be given access to the bodies of their deceased relatives.

c) Destruction of Property

Alongside the killings, widespread destruction of both public and private property was reported. Damaged properties include Bus Rapid Transit stations, fuel stations, vehicles, government offices, and polling centers, some of which were set on fire. Ballot boxes containing either cast or unused ballot papers were also destroyed. We don't condone such destructions and urge Tanzanians to refrain from damaging property during protests. Public infrastructure is built with taxpayers' money and should be safeguarded. Nevertheless, such acts of vandalism cannot justify the indiscriminate killing of civilians or the pursuit and torture of individuals in their homes. There was no justification whatsoever for using live ammunition against unarmed citizens. When demonstrations are managed responsibly, loss of life and destruction are minimal or non-existent.

d) Internet Shutdown

During the same period (October 29 to November 3, 2025), internet access across the country was completely shut down. This measure severely disrupted citizens and institutions, affecting communication and access to information. It also crippled business activities, banking services, mobile money transactions, air transport, healthcare delivery, and both public and private transport systems. Such an action contravenes Article 18 of the Tanzanian Constitution, which guarantees freedom of expression and access to information, as well as international and regional human rights treaties, including the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. Restricting internet access violates fundamental human rights. In today's world, internet use is an essential tool for realizing and protecting human rights. The shutdown caused immense economic losses to individuals and the nation at large.

e) Arrests and Beatings

Beyond the killings, there were numerous other human rights violations, including arbitrary arrests and assaults on journalists, politicians, and human rights defenders. Many detainees were subjected to torture and unlawful detention, spreading fear among the population and undermining freedom of expression, assembly, and political participation.

Several journalists had their equipment confiscated, and as of November 4, arrests of media professionals continue in various parts of the country. Many young people remain in detention without access to family members or legal counsel. These actions have severely harmed human rights, the rule of law, and democracy in Tanzania. There is an urgent need for an independent investigation, accountability, and justice for victims.

3.0 Efforts Undertaken by THRDC and TLS Before the Crisis

THRDC and TLS have on multiple occasions issued recommendations, advice, and appeals to the government and the ruling party, calling for national dialogue before the 2025 elections. Unfortunately, these calls were ignored.

We firmly believed that the best way to prevent unrest was through national dialogue—addressing citizens’ grievances before elections. Truth and integrity do not vanish through neglect, and conscience does not die in silence. We did not choose this dark period of tragedy; it was imposed upon the nation by those unwilling to listen. When truth and reason are dismissed, darkness follows. Yet, darkness can never overcome the light of a just conscience. Truth may be suppressed temporarily, but it always returns—brighter, stronger, and unstoppable.

We urge all justice-loving citizens to resist oppression. Opposing tyranny is not rebellion—it is patriotism. Defending freedom, dignity, and human rights is every citizen’s sacred duty. Freedom and justice are not gifts from the powerful; they are God-given rights to all people.

4.0 THRDC and TLS Calls to Action

- a) We urge all families with missing relatives to report to relevant authorities or to human rights organizations and TLS regional offices to assist in tracing efforts.
- b) We call upon the Police Force to stop raiding homes and arresting journalists, citizens, politicians, and human rights defenders, and to drop all fabricated terrorism-related charges.
- c) We demand an immediate halt to ongoing arrests of individuals accused of organizing or supporting peaceful demonstrations.
- d) We appeal to THRDC and TLS member organizations to provide free legal aid to families who lost loved ones, missing relatives, or victims of unlawful detention and prosecution.

5.0 Conclusion

THRDC and TLS reaffirm that true peace and democracy cannot be built through the suppression of free expression, unlawful arrests, or censorship. We call upon the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania to urgently restore calm, unity, transparency, genuine democracy, and protection of human rights, in accordance with the Constitution, national laws, and international human rights conventions ratified by Tanzania.

We remain steadfast in our commitment to defend the rights, lives, and dignity of every Tanzanian—to build a nation of peace, love, and solidarity.

Issued today November, 4 2025:



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