

TANZANIA



THE ISSUE:

Elected in 2016, President John Magufuli has restricted Tanzanians' freedom of expression, assembly, press, and association through repressive laws and tightly amended national government orders. In mid-2016, the administration enacted a ban on all political activity until the 2020 elections. This has resulted in mass suppression of opposition party politicians and the suspicious disappearance of opposition party leaders. Moreover, several major leaders of the opposition party, CHADEMA, have been imprisoned or targeted in violent attacks, likely committed by members of the Magufuli administration. In June 2016, the Media Services Act was amended, impeding the right to information, and in June 2019, parliament amended the Political Parties Act to restrict peaceful assembly. Human rights groups have continued to be silenced, with Tanzanian officials controlling the dissemination of information used for research purposes – a massive violation of freedom of information. Any published information that can incite “fear and alarm” is subject to heavy court fines.

While these—among other restrictive laws—impact every Tanzanian citizen at large, human rights groups, opposition party members, researchers, low-income individuals, and online bloggers are most affected by President Magufuli's repressive and draconian restrictions on basic freedoms.

AMNESTY CASE:

Erick Kabendera, a respected journalist whose investigations have been critical of the human rights record of the Tanzanian government, was taken by six men on July 29, 2019, and held incommunicado for more than 24 hours. He was charged on August 5 with three offences that he allegedly committed between January 2015 and July 2019 in Dar es Salaam. Concerns have been raised for his wellbeing, as his health has deteriorated since his detention.

TALKING POINTS:

- The United States is alarmed over restrictions to freedom of expression, assembly, press, association, and political activity have resulted in the denial of basic freedoms for all Tanzanians and mass suppression of the main opposition party.
- The United States calls upon President Magufuli to revoke restrictions on freedom of expression, association, and assembly that undermine the ability of civil society organizations to advocate for basic freedoms.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Issue a public condemnation of the state of human rights and basic freedoms in Tanzania, drawing specific attention to the Political Parties Act and the Media Services Act.
- Publicly raise the cases of Erick Kabendera and Tito Elia Magoti and call on the government of Tanzania to release them and other prisoners of conscience.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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