

Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism

Ref.: AL TZA 6/2025
(Please use this reference in your reply)

1 December 2025

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacity as Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders and Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 59/4, 60/8, 54/14, 52/9, 52/4 and 58/14.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning **allegations of the use of excessive and lethal force by security forces leading to widespread extrajudicial killings and injuries of protesters, as well as the arbitrary arrests and detentions, enforced disappearances of protesters and civil society activists, an internet shutdown and the intimidation and harassment of journalists, human rights defenders and civil society activists, in cities and towns across Tanzania, in the aftermath of the general elections on 29 October 2025.**

In this context we wish to recall the previous communications TZA 4/2025, TZA 1/2025, TZA 3/2024 concerning human rights violations in Tanzania in the lead up to the local elections in November 2024 and the general elections held in October 2025, including arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances. In this context we thank your Excellency's Government for the responses provided to communications TZA 4/2025 and TZA 1/2025 and regret that the concerns expressed therein of suppressing political dissent through intimidation and harassment, arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances, have not been adequately addressed by the Government, instead an escalation in human rights violations and further shrinking of the civic space have been reported.

According to the information received:

Background

Prior to the elections, early warning signs were documented, and concerns were raised, including by Special Procedures mechanisms in previous communications. In particular, the 2024 amendments to the Independent National Commission Act, the Presidential and Councillors Elections Act, and the Political Parties Affairs (Amendment) Act raised serious questions about the

independence of key institutions, notably regarding the appointment, removal, and funding of the electoral commission. These changes, coupled with newly introduced restrictions, reportedly resulted in the disqualification of opposition candidates during the nomination process, undermining the fairness and inclusivity of the electoral framework.

Between 1 and 9 October 2025, 13 members and supporters of the opposition party CHADEMA had reportedly forcibly disappeared. In addition, widespread patterns of arbitrary arrest and detention of political opponents and perceived dissidents have been documented in the lead-up to, during, and following the elections.

On 28 and 29 October 2025, Presidential and Parliamentary elections were held in Tanzania. The elections proceeded despite opposition leaders from the two main opposition parties, CHADEMA and ACT-Wazalendo, being barred or disqualified from contesting, and in some cases detained or forcibly disappeared. Some opposition leaders reportedly remain in detention to this day and face terrorism-related charges.

On 29 October 2025, many Tanzanians across the country, especially the youth, organized to protest against the ruling political party, CCM, by boycotting the elections and turning to the streets to protest. It is reported that protests erupted all over the country. The Government's response was reportedly the use of immediate and lethal force on protesters. The Government officially imposed a midnight curfew in Dar es Salaam. The curfew appeared to extend to other parts of the country, although no official communication was reportedly issued and internet shutdowns across the country prevented many from being informed of the imposed curfew. Police and military personnel advised citizens to return to their homes and were deployed to establish road checkpoints requiring travellers to present proof of worker status. Reportedly, the Zanzibar anti-smuggling police unit (KMKM) was sent to Dar es Salaam to join the broader security taskforce to suppress the protests. Reportedly, there was the possible involvement of death squads and foreign actors were also deployed. According to information received, officers were given orders to shoot to kill during the enforced curfew. There were reports of violent clashes with police, killings, injured persons filling up hospitals, roadblocks, and internet outages reported nationwide.

As night fell, on 29 October 2025, Government authorities shut down the internet completely. Social media platforms and communication channels became inaccessible and mobile data services were severely restricted. The shutdown remained in effect for six days until 3 November 2025.

Reportedly, the number of people who have been forcibly disappeared and extrajudicially killed in the aftermath of the elections on 29 October 2025 to date is estimated at least 700 people, while other estimations point to thousands of potential victims.

We have also received reports of the disappearance of the bodies of victims at several morgues, and allegations that human remains are being incinerated or

buried in unidentified mass graves. In some cases, family members who had been able to find and identify the remains of their beloved ones have allegedly been forced to sign false statements with random reasons of death to receive the bodies.

In addition, we received reports of transnational repression, including extensive surveillance – physical and digital – in neighbouring countries, targeting human rights defenders and civil society organizations involved in the monitoring and reporting of human rights violations committed in the context of the aforementioned protests, and/or in the defence of the victims.

The UN Secretary-General António Guterres expressed deep concern about the situation in Tanzania, including reports of deaths and injuries during demonstrations, and called for restraint, rejection of violence, and engagement in inclusive and constructive dialogue to prevent further escalation.¹

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) issued a series of statements expressing deep concern regarding the human rights situation in Tanzania, in light of the reports of the violence following post-election protests. According to these reports, hundreds of people resulted dead and injured following clashes with security forces and the nationwide internet shutdown. The Commission called on the Government “to prioritize de-escalating the prevailing situation, in addition to ensuring that security forces refrain from using disproportionate force against protesters” and urged the Government to initiate investigations into these reports.²

Hundreds of people were reportedly arrested and detained in the aftermath of the elections, many of whom were charged with treason, conspiracy to commit an offence, and armed robbery among other. On 25 November 2025, at least 20 people were released from detention.

Without wishing to prejudge the accuracy of the information received, we express serious concerns at the allegations of human rights violations and the curtailment of the exercise of fundamental freedoms by security forces against protesters across cities and towns in Tanzania, including in Dar es Salaam.

We express our utter dismay at the alleged use of excessive and lethal force by security forces against protesters. We further express our shock and dismay at reports of targeted killings of protesters during and after demonstrations. The use of force has resulted in significant loss of life, and injuries of a serious nature. We also express our concern at the alleged arbitrary arrests and detentions, as well as enforced disappearances of protesters and civil society activists, both during and after the demonstrations. We are also alarmed about the reports of reprisals against citizens who have spoken up or documented the violations, including human rights defenders, which seems part of a very concerning effort to cover up potential crimes and serious human rights violations. In this regard, we first remind the authorities that the State remains responsible for the acts of State agents if they act in that capacity, “even if it exceeds its authority or contravenes instructions” (see article 7 of the Articles on State

¹ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/10/1166243>

² <https://achpr.au.int/en/news/press-releases/2025-11-01/human-rights-situation-tanzania>

Responsibility for Internationally Wrongful Acts).

Without expressing at this stage an opinion on the facts reported and on whether the detention of the concerned individuals is arbitrary or not, we would like to appeal to your Excellency's Government to take all necessary measures to guarantee their right not to be deprived arbitrarily of their liberty and to fair proceedings before an independent and impartial tribunal, in accordance with articles 9 and 14 of the ICCPR.

Should the use of terrorism-related charges be confirmed, we recall that States must ensure that counter-terrorism legislation complies with international law and the principles of legality, necessity, proportionality, and non-discrimination. We also emphasise that counter-terrorism charges should never be abused to suppress the legitimate exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, association peaceful assembly and political participation.

We also express serious concern at the imposed restrictions on media freedom, freedom of expression and access to information, including the reported internet shutdown across Tanzania in the aftermath of the elections. Shutdowns are never compatible with international law as they fail to meet the established test for restrictions on the right to freedom of expression under article 19 (3), and of peaceful assembly found in article 21 of the ICCPR. In most cases, network shutdown orders lack a legal basis. Where a legal basis does exist, shutdown orders are often coupled with broad and vague provisions and lack adequate independent oversight. While these measures are typically justified on grounds of national security and public order, as an indiscriminate, blanket measure, they are a disproportionate – and generally ineffective – means of achieving any potential legitimate security aims (A/HRC/41/41, para. 51-52).

Finally, we would like to express our deep concern about the reported widespread violence and human rights violations against Tanzanian citizens, which conveys a disturbing picture about the state of democracy and the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Tanzania and assaults the essential role that civil society plays in democratic governance, such as promoting transparency and accountability. By dismantling opposition capacity to organise and participate in the political process, the government undermines democratic standards and reinforces authoritarianism.

We take note of the establishment of an independent and impartial commission of inquiry to inform the public and the international community about the causes of the protests, as well as the human rights violations committed. We recommend that the commission also advance in proposals to ensure the access to accountability, justice and reparation, including guarantees of non-recurrence. We stand ready to technically support this initiative.

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, please refer to the **Annex on Reference to international human rights law** attached to this letter which cites international human rights instruments and standards relevant to these allegations.

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and any comment you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please provide information about the number of victims of the alleged killings and enforced disappearances registered by your Excellency's Government.
3. Please provide information on measures taken by your Excellency's Government to carry out a prompt, impartial, independent, thorough and effective investigation into the use of excessive and lethal force and targeted killings and enforced disappearances of protesters. If no investigations have yet been undertaken, or if they have been inconclusive, please provide information as to the reasons thereof.
4. Please provide information on the measures taken by your Excellency's Government to carry out an inquiry or to investigate the reported missing or enforced disappearance and to establish their fate and whereabouts, and in the event of death, to locate, respect, exhume and return their remains to their families. If no inquiry has taken place, please explain why.
5. Please provide information on the factual and legal basis for the arrest and detention of peaceful protesters. Please include information on how many detained protesters have since been released, and with regards to those still detained, the place of detention and their state of health, as well as whether they have been charged with a recognizable criminal offence, have been granted access to a lawyer of their choice, and have been promptly brought before a judge to determine the validity of their detention.
6. Please provide information on the number of bodies under the custody of the state and the measures that the government is taking to inform the families and to undertake an independent investigation that includes the participation of independent forensic experts, according to the Revised United Nations Manual on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions.
7. Please provide information on which measures the State has taken to ensure that any restrictions on media coverage and internet shutdowns have been lifted. Please provide information also on what legal basis, and under which conditions, internet shutdowns are being carried out.
8. Please indicate what measures have been taken to ensure that human rights defenders in Tanzania are able to carry out their peaceful and legitimate work in a safe and enabling environment without fear of threats or acts of intimidation and harassment of any sort.

This communication and any response received from your Excellency's Government will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) within

60 days. They will also subsequently be made available in the usual report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

While awaiting a reply, we urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to prevent any irreparable harm to the life and personal integrity of the persons mentioned in the communication, to halt the alleged violations, and to prevent their re-occurrence and, in the event that the investigations support or suggest the allegations to be correct, to ensure the accountability of any person(s) responsible for the alleged violations.

We may publicly express our concerns in the near future as, in our view, the information upon which the press release will be based is sufficiently reliable to indicate a matter warranting immediate attention. We also believe that the wider public should be alerted to the potential implications of the above-mentioned allegations. The press release will indicate that we have been in contact with your Excellency's Government to clarify the issue/s in question.

We would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government that should sources submit the allegations concerning individual cases of enforced disappearances for the consideration of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances under its humanitarian procedure, the case will be examined by the Working Group according to its methods of work, in which case your Excellency's Government will be informed by separate correspondence.

We would like to inform you that having transmitted a communication, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention may also transmit a case through its regular procedure in order to render an opinion on whether a deprivation of liberty was arbitrary or not. The present communication in no way prejudices any opinion the Working Group may render. The Government is required to respond separately to this letter and the regular procedure. As well, should the source submit allegations concerning individual cases of enforced disappearances for the consideration of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances under its humanitarian procedure, the case will be examined by the Working Group according to its methods of work, in which case your Excellency's Government will be informed by separate correspondence.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

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Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association

Matthew Gillett
Vice-Chair on communications of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention

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freedoms while countering terrorism

Annex

Reference to international human rights law

In connection with above alleged facts and concerns, we would like to refer to aforementioned articles 2, 6, 7, 9, 14, 16, 19, 21 and 22, read alone and in conjunction with article 2(3) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), ratified by Tanzania on 11 June 1976. These articles guarantee the right to life, the prohibition of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention, right to liberty and security of person, equality before the courts and tribunals, right of recognition as person before the law, and the rights to freedom of opinion and expression, association and peaceful assembly, respectively.

Furthermore, in its general comment 6, paragraph 3, the Human Rights Committee noted that it considers article 6 (1) of the ICCPR to include that States parties should take measures to prevent and punish deprivation of life by criminal acts. In addition, in its general comment No. 31, the Committee stated that there is a positive obligation on States Parties to ensure the protection of the rights contained in the Covenant against violations by private persons or entities, which includes the duty to take appropriate measures to prevent, investigate, prosecute and punish those responsible and repair the damage caused by private persons or entities (CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.13, paras. 8 and 18). A failure to investigate and bring perpetrators of such violations to justice could in and of itself give rise to a separate breach of the ICCPR.

We remind your Excellency's Government that the General Comments on the right to life under article 6 of the ICCPR entails a duty to take "all necessary measures intended to prevent arbitrary deprivations of life by their law enforcement officials" (CCPR/C/GC/36, para. 13). In the policing of assemblies, the primary duty of law enforcement agencies is to facilitate peaceful assemblies and protect individuals from harm (CCPR/C/AGO/CO/1, para. 21, A/HRC/31/66, para. 50, and A/HRC/55/60 para. 25). Where justified, the State is under a duty to adopt the minimum force necessary to achieve its protective aim; besides, law enforcement should ensure that firearms or other lethal weapons are never used in the dispersal of protests, even when such protests may have become violent or partially violent. Firearms may only be used to protect against an imminent threat to life of oneself or others, in accordance with principle 9 of the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials (principle 4) (see also CCPR/C/GC/36, para. 14, and A/HRC/55/60, para. 79(h)). Law enforcement in the context of protests should seek to de-escalate situations that might result in violence, exhausting non-violent means, giving prior warning if it becomes absolutely necessary to use force. Any use of force must comply with the fundamental principles of legality, necessity, proportionality, precaution and non-discrimination applicable to articles 6 and 7 of the Covenant, and those using force must be accountable for each use of force (CCPR/C/GC/37, para. 78).

We would like to call the attention of your Excellency's Government to the joint report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, which affirms that even if participants in an assembly are not peaceful and

as a result forfeit their right to peaceful assembly, they retain all the other rights protected under the ICCPR, subject to the normal limitations. No assembly should thus be considered unprotected (A/ HRC/31/66, para. 8-9). Furthermore, the report of the Special Rapporteur on Torture (A/72/178) states that, “any extra-custodial use of force that does not pursue a lawful purpose (legality), or that is unnecessary for the achievement of a lawful purpose (necessity), or that inflicts excessive harm compared to the purpose pursued (proportionality) contradicts established international legal principles governing the use of force by law enforcement officials and amounts to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.” In addition, the Working Group’s thematic study on enforced disappearances and elections (A/HRC/57/54/Add.4) raises concern about the enforced disappearances of journalists, who among other actors have diverse roles in elections and warns that post elections violence against them appear to aim at silencing dissent.

Moreover, the Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions establish the obligation of States to conduct a thorough, prompt and impartial investigation of all suspected cases of extra-legal, arbitrary and summary executions (principle 9), and to ensure effective protection to those who receive death threats and are in danger of extra-legal, arbitrary or summary executions (principle 4).

Furthermore, we make reference to resolution 12/16 of the Human Rights Council, which calls upon States to investigate effectively threats and acts of violence, including terrorist acts, against journalists, and to bring to justice those responsible to combat impunity.

The absolute and non-derogable prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment is codified in article 7 of the ICCPR. While article 9 of the ICCPR enshrines the right to liberty and security of person and establishing in particular that no one shall be deprived of his or her liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law as well as the right to legal assistance from the moment of detention. At the time of arrest, every person shall be informed of the reasons for the arrest and shall be promptly informed of any charges against them (art. 9(2)). Another guarantee is that the detained person shall be brought promptly before a judge (art. 9(3)) and is entitled to challenge the legality of such detention before a judicial authority (art. 9(4)). In its general comment No. 35, the Human Rights Committee has found that arrest or detention as punishment for the legitimate exercise of the rights as guaranteed by the Covenant is arbitrary, including freedom of opinion and expression (art. 19), freedom of assembly (art. 21), freedom of association (art. 22) and freedom of religion or belief (art. 18). It has further stated that arrest or detention on discriminatory grounds in violation of article 2(1), article 3 or article 26 is also in principle arbitrary. Furthermore, article 14 of the ICCPR upholds the right to a fair trial and equality of all persons before the courts and tribunals.

With regard to the alleged enforced disappearances concerned, they would amount to violations of articles 6, 7, 9 and 16 of the ICCPR, read alone and in conjunction with article 2(3). Equally, the right not to be subjected to an enforced disappearance is of a non-derogable nature and the prohibition of this crime, as well as the obligation to investigate it, have attained the status of *jus cogens*. Furthermore, enforced disappearance constitutes a particularly aggravated form of arbitrary detention

and such deprivation of liberty, entailing a refusal to disclose the fate or whereabouts of the persons concerned or to acknowledge their detention, lacks any valid legal basis under any circumstance and is inherently arbitrary, as it places the person outside the protection of the law, in violation of article 6 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Human Rights Committee has established that enforced disappearance violates the right to personal liberty and personal security, and the right to life (CCPR/C/GC/36, paras. 57 and 58).

We also recall that the absolute prohibition of enforced disappearances and the corresponding obligation to investigate them and punish those responsible have attained the status of *jus cogens*. We also refer to the United Nations Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and, in particular, articles 2, 9, 10, 11 and 12 which indicate that no State shall practice, permit or tolerate enforced disappearances; the right to a prompt and effective judicial remedy to determine the whereabouts of persons deprived of their liberty; to access of competent national authorities to all places of detention; to be held in an officially recognized place of detention, and to be brought before a judicial authority promptly after detention; to accurate information on the detention of persons and their place of detention being made available to their family, counsel or other persons with a legitimate interest; and to the maintenance in every place of detention of official up-to-date registers of all detained persons. Article 7 of the Declaration clearly establishes that no circumstance whatsoever, whether a threat of war, a state of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked to justify enforced disappearances. Furthermore, we also make reference to general comment No. 36 on article 6 of the ICCPR, which states, *inter alia*, that extreme forms of arbitrary detention that are themselves life-threatening, in particular enforced disappearances, violate the right to personal liberty and personal security and are incompatible with the right to life (para. 57), and that enforced disappearance constitutes a unique and integrated series of acts and omissions representing a grave threat to life, and States parties must take adequate measures to prevent the enforced disappearance of individuals, and conduct an effective and speedy inquiry to establish the fate and whereabouts of persons who may have been subject to enforced disappearance. (para. 58).

Article 19 of the ICCPR guarantees the right of everyone to freedom of opinion and expression, which includes “freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice”. In its general comment No. 34 on the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the Human Rights Committee has found that restrictions of the right to freedom of opinion and expression that a Government seeks to justify on grounds of national security and public order should adhere to the principles of necessity and proportionality, be designed and implemented in a way that respects the universality of human rights and the principle of non-discrimination, and should not be used to prosecute human rights defenders. The Committee has also established that States parties to the ICCPR are required to guarantee the right to freedom of expression, including “political discourse, commentary on one's own and on public affairs, canvassing, discussion of human rights, journalism, cultural and artistic expression, teaching, and religious discourse” (para. 11). With regard to the laws under which the victims have been prosecuted, it is established in paragraph 25 of the general comment that a norm, to be characterized as a “law”, must be formulated with sufficient precision to enable an individual to regulate his or her conduct

accordingly. A law may not confer unfettered discretion for the restriction of freedom of expression on those charged with its execution. Laws must provide sufficient guidance to those charged with their execution to enable them to ascertain what sorts of expression are properly restricted and what sorts are not ([CCPR/C/GC/34](#)).

Human Rights Council resolution 24/5 “reminds States of their obligation to respect and fully protect the rights of all individuals to assemble peacefully and associate freely, online as well as offline, including in the context of elections and including persons espousing minority or dissenting views or beliefs, human rights defenders, trade unionists and others, including migrants, seeking to exercise or to promote these rights, and to take all necessary measures to ensure that any restrictions of the free exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association are in accordance with their obligations under international human rights law (OP2)”.

We would also like to remind your Excellency’s Government that internet shutdowns affect the capacity of human rights defenders and journalists to carry out their work, monitor election processes, and document or report on human rights abuses. In this regard, we would like to recall the fundamental principles set forth in the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, also known as the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. In particular, articles 1 and 2 state that everyone has the right to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels and that each State has a prime responsibility and duty to protect, promote and implement all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Furthermore, we would like to refer to article 5(a) and 5(b) of the Declaration, providing for everyone’s right to meet or assemble peacefully and to form, join and participate in non-governmental organizations, associations or groups, and article 6(a) and 6(b), holding that everyone has the right to know, seek, obtain, receive and hold information and to publish, impart or disseminate to others views, information and knowledge on all human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Declaration further recalls the obligation of the State to “take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights”.