

Joint Stakeholder Submission to the Fourth Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review of the Republic of Tanzania

4th Cycle - 53rd session of the UPR

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JamiiAfrica



Introduction

1. Tanzania underwent its third Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in November 2021,¹ during which it received 252 recommendations, of which it accepted 167² for implementation, partially accepted 20, and noted 65.³
2. In support of the accepted recommendations, Tanzania noted that its decision aligned with the country's Constitution, 1977, and the Constitution of semi-autonomous Zanzibar, 1984. It also noted that the supported recommendations were aligned with policies, laws, and programs which call for the promotion and protection of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, emerging human rights issues, and development priorities.⁴
3. The partially accepted recommendations were noted to only have aspects in alignment with the laws of the United Republic of Tanzania.⁵ While the noted recommendations were considered to be contrary to the national laws.⁶
4. During the last Review, several States expressed concern about the persistent restrictions on freedom of expression in Tanzania.⁷ They recommended that the Government takes concrete steps to safeguard this right. This includes protecting the safety of journalists and media workers, and ending harassment, arbitrary arrests, and enforced disappearances of journalists and human rights defenders.
5. This report highlights the status of Tanzania's progress in implementing UPR recommendations relevant to online freedom of expression, freedom of association and assembly, access to information, data protection and privacy and gender equity.

¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 'Universal Periodic Review – United Republic of Tanzania' <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/tz-index>

² United Nations Human Rights Council, 'Report of the Working Influence Group on the Universal Periodic Review: United Republic of Tanzania-Addendum' (23 March 2022) UN Doc A/HRC/49/13/Add.1, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/49/13/Add.1> (accessed 8 April 2026).

³ United Nations Office at Geneva, 'MIDDAY – Human Rights Council Adopts Outcomes of Universal Periodic Review of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Papua New Guinea, Tajikistan and Tanzania' (23 March 2022), <https://www.ungeneva.org/es/news-media/meeting-summary/2022/03/midday-human-rights-council-adopts-outcomes-universal-periodic> (accessed 12 March 2026).

⁴ United Nations Human Rights Council, 'Report of the Working Influence Group on the Universal Periodic Review: United Republic of Tanzania-Addendum,' above.

⁵ As Above.

⁶ As Above.

⁷ SADC Electoral Observation Mission, 'Preliminary Statement by the Right Honourable Richard Msowoya, Head of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission to the 2025 General Election of the United Republic of Tanzania' (3 November 2025) <https://www.sadc.int/document/preliminary-statement-right-honourable-richard-msowoya-former-speaker-parliament-republic> (accessed 20 February 2026)

Update Since Last Review

6. Since its 2021 UPR assessment, Tanzania has taken legal, economic, and social measures that have greatly impacted human rights, including digital rights in the country. Below are some of the key highlights of several developments.
7. Since the second cycle, online connectivity in Tanzania has continued to grow. As of December 2025, statistics published by the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA) show that internet penetration stood at 85.3%, while telecommunications penetration (teledensity) stood at 156.9%.⁸ TCRA further reported 58.1 million internet subscriptions and 106.9 million telecommunication subscriptions by December 2025.⁹
8. In 2022, Tanzania enacted the Personal Data Protection Act, 2022 (PDPA). The Act provides for the protection of personal data. It buttresses this role by establishing the Personal Data Protection Commission (PDPC) with powers over registration, oversight, investigations, and enforcement of the law. The PDPC, later in 2023, issued subsidiary regulations to guide the implementation and enforcement of the Act.¹⁰
9. In 2022, to improve media freedoms, the Tanzanian government lifted media bans on various newspapers, including MwanaHALISI and Tanzania Daima. The breather followed a period in which multiple television stations and newspapers had been victims of license revocation under the Media Services Act of 2016 for posting news that was critical of the government and exposing human rights violations.¹¹
10. In response to civil society concerns on the laws stifling freedom of expression online, the Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) (Amendment) Regulations 2022¹² amended the Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) (Amendment) Regulations 2020,¹³ and later to Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) (Amendment) Regulations 2025.¹⁴ Regressive provisions, including those requiring internet café operators to install surveillance cameras and monitor users' digital activities, and the requirement of payment of mandatory hefty licensing fees for online content users, such as social media users and independent bloggers, were expunged.
11. In 2023, Tanzania amended the Media Services Act 2016.¹⁵ The Act regulates media services in the country. There was a noticeable effort to lift some restrictions, such as the decriminalisation of defamation, and transferring powers of the Director of the Information Services Authority to the Independent Media Council of Tanzania (IMC) to oversee the processes for resolving disputes in media. This was a crucial boost to checking government excesses and censorship of media content. It also provided room for self-regulation within the media.

⁸ Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority, 'Takwimu' <https://www.tcra.go.tz/services/statistics> accessed 9 April 2026.

⁹ Batholomew Marcel, 'Universal and Meaningful Connectivity' (presentation, Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority, March 2026) <https://www.itu.int/itu-d/sites/projectumc/wp-content/uploads/sites/42/2026/03/Tanzania-UMC-workshop.pdf>, accessed 9 April 2026.

¹⁰ The Personal Data Protection (Personal Data Collection and Processing) Regulations 2023, GN No 449C of 2023

¹¹ Human Rights Watch, 'Tanzania Ends Ban on Four Newspapers' (17 February 2022), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/02/17/tanzania-ends-ban-four-newspapers> (accessed 10 March 2026).

¹² Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) (Amendment) Regulations 2022, https://media.tanzlii.org/media/legislation/334408/source_file/405f39a1ff305584/tz-act-gn-2022-136-publication-document.pdf

¹³ Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) (Amendment) Regulations 2020, [https://www.tcra.go.tz/uploads/documents/sw-1619088125-The%20Electronic%20and%20Postal%20Communications%20\(Online%20Content\)%20Regulations,%202020.pdf](https://www.tcra.go.tz/uploads/documents/sw-1619088125-The%20Electronic%20and%20Postal%20Communications%20(Online%20Content)%20Regulations,%202020.pdf)

¹⁴ Bowmans, 'Tanzania: Amendments to the Electronic Postal Communications (Online Content) Regulations' (27 May 2025) <https://bowmanslaw.com/insights/tanzania-amendments-to-the-electronic-postal-communications-online-content-regulations/>

¹⁵ Written Laws (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act, 2023

12. Tanzania, since the previous review, has continued to expand digital governance through the Tanzania National Identification Authority (NIDA), which now serves as a central platform for interoperability across public and private services. NIDA reports integrations with 124 institutions and relies on consent-based identity verification for services including tax identification number issuance with the Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA), company administration and registration through the Business Registration and Licensing Agency (BRELA) and Know Your Customer compliance within banking. NIDA's online portal enables real-time verification and reconciliation for authorized stakeholders.¹⁶
13. In July 2024, Tanzania launched the Digital Economy Strategic Framework (DESF) 2024–2034.¹⁷ The DESF is hinged on internet access and inclusion, which are set to foster national digital transformation through the expansion of digital infrastructure and services such as the establishment of nationwide data centres and cloud services. The universal access-based nature of the DESF is expected to enhance access to information, digital literacy, equitable societal participation, economic empowerment and financial inclusion, and equal access to public services. In governance of Artificial Intelligence (AI), in 2025, Tanzania completed a UNESCO AI Readiness Assessment¹⁸ to steer an ethical, inclusive national AI strategy. The same year, the Ministry of Education issued National Guidelines for AI in Education. Earlier in 2022, the Ministry of Health issued the Policy Framework for Artificial Intelligence in the Health Sector. The Ministry of Communication, and Information Technology (MCIT) has drafted the Tanzania National Artificial Intelligence Strategy Framework which is currently under consultations.
14. In 2024, Tanzania enacted the Child Protection Laws (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act, 2024,¹⁹ which amended the Cyber Crimes Act, the Law of the Child Act, and the Legal Aid Act. The Act replaced the outdated term “child pornography” with “child sexual abuse material” and “child sexual exploitation material”, and criminalised the production, distribution, procurement, and possession of such material through a computer system. It also introduced two distinct grooming offences: first, online grooming of a child for sexual acts or pornographic performances; and second, under a separate cyber terrorism provision, using a computer system to groom or solicit a child for a meeting for the purpose of engaging in terrorist acts.

Key Digital Rights Concerns

15. Despite the above highlighted positive developments, Tanzania's civic space has been continually declining, with digital rights and freedoms, including freedom of expression, access to information, assembly and association, and data privacy and protection, among others, being curtailed. Human Rights Defenders, civil society organisations (CSOs), the media and journalists, online activists and bloggers, and other actors have been targeted with persecutions, intimidations, arrests, detentions, and prosecutions. Below is a highlight of some of the major declines in the digital civic spaces in the country.

¹⁶ Dr. P. Boshe, *Digital Identity in Tanzania: Case Study Conducted, as Part of a Ten-Country Exploration of Socio-Digital ID Systems in Parts of Africa*, <https://researchictafrica.net/research/digital-identity-in-tanzania-case-study-conducted-as-part-of-a-ten-country-exploration-of-socio-digital-id-systems-in-parts-of-africa/> (accessed 26 February 2026).

¹⁷ Ministry of Information, Communication and Information Technology, *Tanzania Digital Economy Strategic Framework 2024-2034 (July 2024)*

¹⁸ UNESCO and United Nations Tanzania, *Artificial Intelligence Readiness Assessment Report ; Tanzania (8 July 2025)*

https://articles.unesco.org/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2025/07/CAMBODIA%20-%20AI%20Readiness%20Assessment%20Report%202025_0.pdf,

¹⁹ *Child Protection Laws (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act, 2024 (Act No 10 of 2024) ss 1–2*. <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://oagmis.oag.go.tz/portal/acts/265/download&ved=2ahUKEwjspfizueGTAXcVaQEHelqD2EQFnoECBwQAQ&usg=AOvVaw1nRAQuHL8BhS1WWRwp6tn4>

16. Freedom of expression is still heavily restricted in the country. Since the last Review, authorities have continued to pass and enforce vague and repressive laws that unfairly limit civic space, hinder independent journalism, and silence dissenting voices. These laws, along with strict regulations, have created an environment where people could face criminal charges, fines, or jail for speech that falls under broadly defined rules.
17. Despite the positive changes that were made under the Media Services Act by the 2023 amendment, section 8, together with Sections 5, 9, and 10, still leaves effective control over print media licensing in the hands of the Director of the Information Services Department through mandatory licensing requirements. These requirements have a chilling effect on freedom of expression and access to information and technically kick out potential publishers of content.
18. The Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) Regulations of 2020, as amended in 2022 and 2025 (EPOCA regulations) further entrench repression and suppression in as far as they requires online media service providers to obtain a license from the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA), with non-compliance under regulation 4 (3) punishable by up to 12 months' imprisonment or a fine of at least five million Tanzanian shillings (approximately USD 1930.5) or both.
19. The EPOCA regulations further, in Regulation 8 suppress dissenting opinions by empowering TCRA to revoke licenses of service providers considered to have violated or breached the terms without proportionality requirements or judicial oversight. Similarly, the regulations in the second schedule para (1) (c) also expand obligations on social platforms and prohibited content (including AI-generated content). This adds to the scope of prohibited content, which is widely and vaguely defined.
20. On 13 August 2023, OONI data began showing anomalies consistent with possible blocking of the Clubhouse application in Tanzania.²⁰ Clubhouse had become an important forum for public discussion, and in a High Court case against the alleged blockage, the Government, through the Office of the Chief Government Spokesperson, acknowledged using the platform to communicate with the public. However, the Government denied blocking the platform, and the High Court ultimately held that the petitioner had not proved the alleged restriction.²¹
21. Following the blocking of Clubhouse, several users resorted to the use of Virtual Private Networks (VPNs). In response, on 13 October 2023, the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA) issued a directive restricting the use of VPNs and requiring all users to register with the Authority through an online portal. The directive prompted concerns and objections from civil society organizations, members of the diplomatic community, and the public, particularly regarding its implications for the rights to privacy, freedom of expression, and access to information. As at the time of reporting, the directive remains in force, and the use of an unregistered VPN is treated as a violation of existing regulations.²²

²⁰ Open Observatory of Network Interference, 'Tanzania blocked Clubhouse' (OONI Explorer) <https://explorer.ooni.org/findings/185407756401> accessed 9 April 2026.

²¹ Paul Kisabo v Minister of Information, Communication and Information Technology, Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority and Attorney General Misc Civil Cause No 27860 of 2024 (High Court of Tanzania, Main Registry, Dar es Salaam, 3 May 2024) paras 12–14, 24. https://www.osg.go.tz/uploads/documents/sw-1729781456-KISABO_v_MICIT_TCRA_AND_AG_-_JUDGMENT_-_FINAL_PDF_NEW.pdf

²² VPN in Tanzania Regulated <https://fbattorneys.co.tz/vpn-in-tanzania-regulated/> (accessed on 08 April 2026)

22. In 2024, in yet another intensified crackdown on online civil liberties, 10 incidents of arrests, attacks, harassment, and detention of journalists in different regions in Tanzania occurred. Recorded arrests included two journalists from Mwananchi Communication Limited in Dar es Salaam, two journalists from Jambo TV - a privately owned YouTube space, two journalists in Mbeya, and two journalists from the Press Club in Simiyu.²³
23. On 4 July 2024, the Rungwe Primary Court in Mbeya sentenced 24-year-old painter and TikTok influencer Shadrack Chaula to two years' imprisonment or a fine of five million Tanzanian shillings (USD1930.5) or both under section 16 of the Cybercrimes Act, 2015, for allegedly spreading false information. The charge followed a TikTok video posted on 30 June 2024 in which Chaula burned a photograph of President Samia Suluhu Hassan while using harsh language. Supporters later raised the funds to pay the fine and secure his release. However, on 2 August 2024, Chaula was reportedly abducted by unidentified individuals and has remained missing since.²⁴
24. In October 2024, Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA) suspended the licence of Mwananchi Communications Limited's online platform for 30 days after it published an animated video portraying President Hassan watching reports about abductions.²⁵ The national authorities viewed the video as potentially disrupting national unity and peace. Previously in 2020, Mwananchi newspaper was banned for six months and fined five million Tanzania Shillings (USD1930.5) for publishing false and misleading information Covid-19.
25. In September 2025, TCRA suspended JamiiForums for 90 days, citing alleged violations of national laws.²⁶ Despite the 90-day duration of the ban against JamiiForums, the platform remained blocked for over six months until March 2026. The platform, one of the country's most vibrant platforms for whistleblowing and public interest discussions, had previously faced state pressure, reflecting long-standing concerns about freedom of expression online. Back in December 2016, Maxence Melo, the Founder of JamiiForums was charged with three offences: two counts of not complying with a disclosure order under Section 22(2) of the Cyber Crimes Act (2015) and one count of managing a domain that is not registered in Tanzania under Section 79(c) of the Electronic and Postal Communications Act (2010).²⁷ The charges stemmed from Jamii Forum's refusal to comply with police disclosure notices to reveal the Internet Protocol (IP) addresses, email and phone numbers of users, whose identities authorities sought after whistleblowing corruption scandals in the oil and banking sectors. In June 2018, Melo was acquitted of one of the three charges.²⁸ In April 2020, Melo was convicted of the other charges and sentenced to one year in prison or a fine of three million Tanzania Shillings.²⁹

²³ Tanzania Human Rights Report, 2024, Legal and Human Rights Center, https://humanrights.or.tz/storage/user_storage/681870a52bc97.pdf (accessed on 12 March 2026).

²⁴ Unopposed, Unchecked, Unjust "Wave of terror" Sweeps Tanzania Ahead of 2025 Vote, Amnesty International, 19, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr56/0376/2025/en/> (accessed 12 March 2026).

²⁵ Global State of Democracy Initiative, <https://www.idea.int/weredemocracyscracker/reports/tanzania/october-2024> (accessed 13 March 2026).

²⁶ Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority, 'Kusitisha Kwa Muda Leseni Ya Huduma Za Maudhui Mtandaoni Iliyotolewa Kwa Vapper Tech Limited (JamiiForums)' (Public Notice, September 2025)

https://www.tcra.go.tz/uploads/documents/en-1757156128-TAARIFA_KWA_UMMA___JAMII_FORUMS__1__1032107643381814476641029946369102376331757154927982.pdf (accessed 23 February 2026).

²⁷ CIPESA, "UPDATE: Maxence Melo Charged with Obstruction of Investigations and Operating a Domain Not Registered in Tanzania", 16/12/2016, available at: <https://bit.ly/3rs88KA>

²⁸ CIPESA, "Tanzanian Court Acquits Jamii Forums Founders on One of Three Charges", 07/06/2018, available at: <https://cipesa.org/2018/06/tanzanian-court-acquits-jamii-forums-founders-on-one-of-three-charges/>

²⁹ CPI, "Jamii Forums founder Maxence Melo convicted on obstruction charge, released in Tanzania", 19/11/2020, available at: <https://cpi.org/2020/11/jamii-forums-founder-maxence-melo-convicted-on-obstruction-charge-released-in-tanzania/>; and FIDH, "Tanzania: Conviction of Mr. Maxence Melo from JamiiForums", 14/04/2020, available at: <https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/human-rights-defenders/tanzania-conviction-of-mr-maxence-melo-from-jamiiforums>

Access to Information and Censorship of Content

26. The Electronic Postal Communications (Online Content) (Amendment) Regulations in 2025 and their operationalisation were a key tool for limiting content and information flow. Through the expansion of obligations of internet service providers and social media owners to actively monitor, filter, and prevent access to what is defined as broadly prohibited content, censorship of content became more pronounced. Service providers and social media owners would otherwise face punitive penalties. This had a chilling effect on information flow and led to self-censorship of the service providers to avoid penalties.
27. On 31 July 2025, Tanzania blocked access to YouTube and Facebook during a widely anticipated press conference by the former Tanzanian ambassador to Cuba, Hon. Humphrey Polepole, whose content was critical of the ruling party Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM).³⁰
28. Digital repression with an onslaught on access to information grew markedly ahead of the 2025 General Elections, showing a wider trend of government control and disruption of online speech, public discussion, and flow of information. The restrictions formed part of a continued pattern of platform blocking and online censorship documented by civil society, media, and digital rights organisations.³¹
29. A five-day internet shutdown from 29 October 2025 to 3 November 2025 was imposed throughout Tanzania during the election period, disrupting the ability of citizens, journalists, and observers to access information and document election-related events. Platforms like X (formerly Twitter), TikTok Live, and Instagram Live, and all other timely information providers were cut off. This regressive action put the citizens in an information blackout. Indeed, the 2025 Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Electoral Observation Preliminary Report highlighted concerns about heavy censorship of online platforms, which affected citizens' ability to express political opinions during and after the general elections. Additionally, private media outlets were noted to be self-censoring due to fear of license suspension. These digital restrictions by the Government undermined access to real-time information, and generally online civic engagement under the guise of moral and security concerns.³²

³⁰ Intelligence brief: Tanzania blocks YouTube and Facebook to Suppress Ambassador Polepole demand for President Samia's Replacement in 2025, <https://www.ujasusi.com/p/tanzania-blocks-social-media-polepole-press-briefing> (accessed 12 March 2025).

³¹ Government Intensifies Crackdown on Opposition & Online Spaces ahead of 2025 Elections, <https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/government-intensifies-crackdown-on-opposition-online-spaces-ahead-of-2025-elections/> (accessed 26 February 2026)electoral-relatedhad.

³² CIVICUS Monitor, 'Government intensifies crackdown on opposition & online spaces ahead of 2025 elections' (2025) <https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/government-intensifies-crackdown-on-opposition-online-spaces-ahead-of-2025-elections/> (accessed 20 February 2026).

Assembly and Association

30. In December 2025, following a request from the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA), Meta restricted access to several Tanzanian activists' accounts and removed the account of Mange Kimambi, a Tanzanian activist based in the United States. Kimambi faces money-laundering charges linked to her online activism, including allegations that her Instagram platform contributed to mobilising demonstrations during past elections.³³
31. On 29 October 2025, activist Mika Chavala was arrested after posting an Instagram video in which he joined demonstrators and stated that the difficult living conditions facing many young Tanzanians and Africans left them with no choice but to protest. He was subsequently charged with treason, a non-bailable offence, and remained in custody until December 2025, when the Director of Public Prosecutions informed the court that the state would not proceed with the case, leading to his release.³⁴ Earlier on 9 April 2025, Tundu Lissu, leader of Tanzania's main opposition Party for Democracy and Progress (Chadema), was arrested for treason over posts he made on social media. In his post, he called on "Tanzanians to boycott the forthcoming elections, citing the possibility of rigging."³⁵ As of April 2026, Lissu remained in detention pending trial; because treason is a non-bailable offence under Tanzanian law, he could not be released on bail, and proceedings in his case had been repeatedly adjourned.³⁶
32. The nationwide internet shutdown imposed by the government during the elections in October 2025 completely severed access to all major communication channels and platforms including social media like WhatsApp, Instagram, and X.³⁷ The shutdown dismantled all spaces for public mobilisation, peaceful assembly and association in the online space which in turn undermined and neutralised collective action and demand by civic actors for accountable and transparent elections.³⁸

Data Protection and Privacy

33. The enactment of the Personal Data Protection Act No. 11 of 2022 (PDPA) was a key milestone for Tanzania. However, its enforcement is vulnerable to state overreach.
34. The Electronic Postal Communications (Online Content) Regulations, by virtue of their provisions that specifically criminalise digital anonymity, have widely undermined online privacy. The regulations have been used for surveillance on individuals' activities, both physically and online. Worse still, using regulation 16 (1), the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA) imposed a ban on the use of Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) in 2023 with a potential penalty of up to 12 months' imprisonment or a fine of at least five million Tanzanian shillings (USD 1930.5) or both.³⁹ Not using VPNs ensures real-time and effective exposure of

³³ Activist Mange Kimambi charged with Money Laundering in Tanzania, the Citizen, <https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/national/activist-mange-kimambi-charged-with-money-laundering-in-tanzania-5285058> (accessed 12 March 2026).

³⁴ Treason Charges Dropped Against Influencer Niffer and Activist Chavala in Tanzania Mass Release, the Chanzo Initiative, <https://thechanzo.com/2025/12/03/treason-charges-dropped-against-influencer-niffer-and-activist-chavala-in-tanzania-mass-release/> (accessed 12 March 2026).

³⁵ Tanzania: Stop repression of opposition leaders and immediately release Tundu Lissu, Amnesty International 11 April 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/04/tanzania-stop-repression-of-opposition-leaders-and-immediately-release-tundu-lissu/> (accessed 9 April 2026).

³⁶ Reuters, "Tanzania Court Charges Main Opposition Party Leader with Treason" (10 April 2025) <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/tanzania-court-charges-opposition-party-leader-with-treason-2025-04-10/>

³⁷ GNI, "GNI Statement on the Nationwide Internet Shutdown in Tanzania During the 2025 Elections," December 1, 2025, <https://globalnetworkinitiative.org/gni-statement-on-the-nationwide-internet-shutdown-in-tanzania-during-the-2025-elections/> (accessed 9 April 2026).

³⁸ Matshepo Sehloho, "Tanzania: Government imposes nationwide internet restrictions amid election day protests, Business and Human Rights Centre," 30 October, 2025, <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/tanzania-government-imposes-nationwide-internet-restrictions-amid-election-day-protests/> (accessed 9 April, 2026),,,,,

³⁹ Kevin Namunwa, "Tanzania Imposes Ban On VPN Usage Without A Permit," CIO Africa, 15 October 2023, <https://cioafrica.co/tanzania-imposes-ban-on-vpn-usage-without-a-permit/> (accessed 9 April 2026).

users of online platforms and networks to the authorities.⁴⁰ This puts a chill on their activities for fear of easy identification, arrest, and prosecution.

35. During the period leading to and in the aftermath of elections, state measures intensified, including increased surveillance of online content and private communications, with government agencies issuing public warnings that individuals who shared “illegal” or “misleading” election-related content would face criminal charges. Following the elections, government officials repeatedly stated through press briefings and official channels that sharing certain election-related images could lead to prosecution under cybercrime and online content laws.⁴¹ This created an environment of fear and self-censorship.⁴² This chilling effect restricted citizens and journalists from reporting irregularities or violence in real time.

Technology-Facilitated Gender Violence

36. Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) is increasingly documented in Tanzania’s online spaces, affecting women journalists, politicians, activists, and ordinary users. A 2024/25 case-study by Tech & Media Convergence (TMC), *Echoes of Harm* (Yowe La Kungwi)—mapped sustained harassment patterns on X, including doxxing, sexualised abuse, coordinated trolling and reputational smears, and described weak redress pathways and low survivor confidence in reporting mechanisms.⁴³ Parallel analysis and advocacy by the Zaina Foundation corroborate these modalities (harassment, cyberstalking, non-consensual image sharing, deepfakes, disinformation campaigns), noting that TFGBV disproportionately targets women in public life to silence and exclude them from digital discourse.⁴⁴
37. Election cycles correlate with spikes in harassment and intimidation targeting women who speak out. Tech and Media Convergence (TMC) and Paradigm Initiative (PIN) reported censorship, platform blocks, and threats converged with gendered disinformation and trolling in the run-up to the 2025 general elections, aggravating risks for women candidates, journalists, and advocates.⁴⁵ Broader documentation of shutdowns, platform suspensions (e.g., X), and coercive moderation during 2025 by rights groups and observers illustrates how information controls can magnify TFGBV harm by isolating victims from support and reporting channels.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Paradigm Initiative, *LONDA: Tanzania Digital Rights and Inclusion Report pin 2021*, <https://paradigmhq.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Londa-Tanzania-Report-2021-Ir.pdf> (accessed 9 April 2026).

⁴¹ N. Bhalla, *How an Internet Blackout Affected Elections in Tanzania*, <https://www.context.news/digital-rights/how-an-internet-blackout-affected-tanzanias-election> (accessed 26 February 2026).

⁴² *Tanzania Police Warn Against Sharing Images Following Deadly Election protests*, <https://www.straitstimes.com/world/Tanzanian-police-warn-against-sharing-images-following-deadly-election-protests>, (accessed 26 February 2026).

⁴³ Tech & Media Convergence (TMC), *‘Echoes of Harm: Dissecting TFGBV Through the Eyes of Victims’* (26 November 2024) <https://tmc.co.tz/report-launch-echoes-of-harm-dissecting-technology-facilitated-gender-based-violence-tfgbv-through-the-eyes-of-victims/> (accessed 20 February 2026).

⁴⁴ Zaina Foundation, *‘Strengthening Digital Rights, Gender Equality, and Inclusion Ahead of Tanzania’s 2025 Elections’* (27 October 2025) <https://zainafoundationtz.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/ZAINA-FOUNDATION-BULLETIN-%E2%80%93-OCTOBER-2025.pdf> (accessed 20 February 2026).

⁴⁵ Paradigm Initiative, *‘Press release: Online freedoms under threat as Tanzania heads towards 2025 General Elections, Paradigm Initiative and Tech & Media Convergence warn’* (29 May 2025) <https://paradigmhq.org/press-release-online-freedoms-under-threat-as-tanzania-heads-towards-2025-general-elections-paradigm-initiative-and-tech-media-convergence-warn/>

⁴⁶ Association for Progressive Communications, *Freedom of Expression and Elections in the Digital Age* (Submission, 6 January 2025). https://www.apc.org/sites/default/files/apc_submission_jan_2025_elections_final.pdf

Proposed Recommendations

Legal and Regulatory Measures

1. Repeal or amend repressive, vague, and ambiguous laws that unduly restrict freedom of expression and enable criminal sanctions against journalists, bloggers, and citizens exercising legitimate speech, such as:

1.1 Section 16 of the Cyber Crimes Act, which criminalises the publication of information that is “false, deceptive, misleading or inaccurate” with no safeguards like the requirement of intent to harm.

1.2 Regulation 4 of the Online Content Regulations, which requires all online content service providers using blogs, social media, and instant messaging tools for ordinary civic expression to obtain a state license before publishing content.

1.3 Regulation 7 of the Online Content Regulation, which vests the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA) with near absolute discretion to refuse a license without adequate procedural safeguards, time limits, or substantive criteria.

1.4 Regulation 19 of the Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) Regulations, 2020 vests the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA) with powers to regulate online content, including licensing providers and ordering the removal of prohibited content. This provides a structural mechanism for selective licensing that is used to exclude critical voices from the online public space.

2. Take all necessary legislative measures to ensure that any regulation of online content complies with the principles of legality, necessity, and proportionality in line with Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

2.1 Repeal the vague terms such as “false”, “deceptive” (Section 16, Cyber Crimes Act), and “cultural sensitivities of the general public” (Regulation 9, Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) Regulations as amended).

2.2 Repeal criminal sanctions for online expression since civil remedies are sufficient (Regulation 4, Online Content Regulations).

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3. Enact legislation requiring judicial authorisation, necessity assessments, and independent auditing for all forms of digital surveillance, including monitoring of social media and private communications.

Freedom of Expression and Opinion, Access to Information, and Assembly and Association

1. Prevent Arbitrary Shutdowns and Online Platform Blocking: Regulations 9 and 16 of the Online Content Regulations vest the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA) with unilateral executive authority to order platform-level content removal and access restrictions without prior judicial authorisation. It is recommended that there be a codification of an exhaustive and non-derogable prohibition on nationwide internet shutdowns and a requirement for prior judicial authorization before any restriction on internet access.

2. Cease the arbitrary suspension or blocking of online platforms, including social media pages and digital civic forums such as JamiiForums, and establish a clear, rights-based process for content moderation decisions, ensuring that any order affecting access to online services is subject to prior judicial authorisation, strict necessity and proportionality tests, and effective rights of appeal

2.1. Regulation 8 of the Online Content Regulations should be amended to require prior written notice of a reasonable period of time (14 days) before any intended suspension or revocation, with a full opportunity for the license holder to respond.

3. Require greater transparency from State authorities regarding requests to technology companies for content removal, account restrictions, and user data disclosure, including publication of aggregate statistics, legal grounds invoked, and available safeguards, transparent, lawful, publicly reported cases, and subject to independent oversight.
4. Investigate all cases of arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, or harassment of journalists and online critics, and hold perpetrators accountable in accordance with international standards.
5. Repeal regulation 9(c) of the Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) Regulations, 2020, since it prohibits publishing content related to organising assemblies and demonstrations. Repealing the regulation will align with Article 20 of the Constitution, which protects freedom of assembly, and the regional and international human rights standards.

Data Protection and Privacy

1. Take all necessary measures, including allocation of financial resources, to enhance the capacity of the Personal Data Protection Commission to progressively and effectively carry out its mandate to enforce the Personal Data Protection Act No. 11 of 2022 as spelt out in sections 40 to 42 of the Act.
2. Progressively support nationwide digital rights and privacy literacy campaigns to sensitise and educate citizens about their data rights and how to enforce them. This will buttress the data protection regime in the country.
3. Immediately end unlawful surveillance of citizens, journalists, activists, and opposition actors, and ensure that any monitoring of digital communications is conducted only under a legal framework that is clear, necessary, proportionate, and subject to strict judicial oversight.
4. Establish legal and institutional safeguards to prevent the use of surveillance, digital monitoring, or data-tracking tools to intimidate voters, opposition groups, journalists, or human rights defenders, including prior judicial authorisation, clear legal thresholds, necessity and proportionality tests, independent oversight, time limits, data-minimisation and retention rules, transparency reporting, and accessible remedies for abuse.

Technology-Facilitated Gender Based Violence

1. Integrate Technology-Facilitated Gender-based Violence (TFGBV) protections fully into the implementation of the National Plan of Action to End Violence Against Women and Children (NPA-VAWC II 2024/25–2028/29), dedicate resourcing for digital-safety interventions, and ensure law enforcement and judicial actors are trained to investigate and remedy online abuse.
2. Amend the Cybercrimes Act, 2015, Penal Code, and the Electronic and Postal (Online Content) Regulations to include explicit protections against Technology-Facilitated Gender-based Violence and prohibit their misuse in silencing women journalists, politicians, and activists.



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