

CPJ joins 64 NGOs in calling on Tanzanian government to respect human rights

CPJ, along with 64 other global non-governmental organisations, has written to Tanzanian President John Magufuli to express concern about a worrying decline in the respect of human rights, including freedom of expression.



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In recent months, Tanzania has implemented laws that undermine freedom of speech online, restrictions on peaceful protests, and closed media outlets, the letter said. The organisations urged Magufuli's government to take proactive measures to protect these rights and to recognise publicly the essential role that a vibrant civil society and an independent media play in creating peaceful and equal societies.

“ [#Tanzania](#): 65 rights groups urge government to end attacks on activists, journalists and members of the opposition party. [#Civicspace](#) in rapid decline <https://t.co/PVn1DdeCM8> pic.twitter.com/UfSocmIx9p— CIVICUS (@CIVICUSalliance) [May 10, 2018](#) ”

Extracts from the letter include:

“Tanzania’s long-standing commitment to improving the human rights of all people, both nationally and within the region, is notable and should be acknowledged as such. However, we are deeply alarmed that these human rights issues are

being precipitously undermined by the unwarranted closure of media outlets, judicial persecution and harassment of independent journalists, the targeted assassination of opposition party members, blanket restrictions on peaceful protests and the introduction and invocation of a raft of laws to undermine freedom of speech online. These and other forms of harassment and persecution of civil society and media discussed below erode Tanzania's role as a regional champion of public freedoms, peace and stability and represent a breach of its international, national and regional human rights obligations and commitments.

Despite strong constitutional, United Nations and African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights safeguards protecting the right to freedom of expression, the government has systematically targeted Tanzanian media outlets through a combination of closures and hefty fines on newspapers. This campaign of harassment, which appears to be an attempt to suppress their work to report on government policy and conduct, has resulted in four prominent newspapers being banned in 2017 and four other papers being heavily fined in early 2018."

The letter also addresses the:

- New legal restrictions criminalizing freedom of expression on social and traditional media
- Suspensions, fines and banning media outlets
- Judicial harassment and persecution of journalists and human rights defenders
- Killings and criminal cases against political opposition members
- Harassment, intimidation arbitrary arrest of peaceful protesters



Freedom of expression 'deteriorating' under Magufuli

23 Apr 2018



The letter contains the following recommendations to the Government of Tanzania:

"The undersigned groups urge your government to create an enabling environment for civil society and the media to operate in accordance with the rights enshrined in the Constitution of Tanzania, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, including the guidelines on freedom of association and peaceful assembly. Tanzania has ratified both the ICCPR and the African Charter. At a minimum, the following conditions should be ensured: freedom of association, freedom of expression, the right to operate free from unwarranted state interference, the right to seek and secure funding and the state's duty to protect."

The letter in full and all the signatories to the letter can be read [here](#).

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