

# The OHCHR Multi-Country Office in East Africa and NANHRI civic space newsletter

## January - September 2025

### Working together to create an enabling environment for civic participation and human rights in Uganda, Tanzania and Djibouti

#### Addressing transnational repression

On 15 July 2025, NANHRI, the OHCHR MCO in East Africa and Amnesty International organized a regional online launch of the new [OHCHR Transnational Repression briefer](#). The three organizations discussed the rising concerns and sharp increase of cases of transnational repression in East Africa and advocated for concerted efforts to strengthen the protection of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) across borders.



*We need to stop the harassment and persecution of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) across border whose only crime is the pursuit of truth and dignity - OHCHR MCO Head of Office*



### From commitment to impact - NHRI's role in advancing civic space

From January to July 2025, the **Commission Nationale des Droits de l'Homme de Djibouti (CNDH)** actively promoted civic space through a series of initiatives aimed at strengthening civil society, institutional capacity, and human rights advocacy. These included a training and advocacy campaign focused on empowering civil society actors to address the issue of migrant children living on the streets; a regional visit to Dikhil to enhance collaboration between institutions and civil society for better governance and rights protection; and a gender-based violence awareness workshop led in partnership with the women's network "Elle et Elles" and UNFPA, which mobilized diverse stakeholders to break taboos and promote gender equality.

### Civic space issues



#### A safe and enabling environment in law, policy and practice for CSOs and HRDs

##### Tanzania

- The arrest on 9 April 2025 and harsh treatment of opposition leader [Tindu Lissu](#), including transportation under inhumane conditions and a closed-door trial, raise serious concerns about due process and judicial transparency.
- The Party for Democracy and Progress' (CHADEMA) disqualification from elections for refusing to sign the electoral code of conduct reflects systemic repression.
- In May 2025, a Kenyan and a Ugandan human rights defenders, who came to monitor the trial of Tindu Lissu, were allegedly subjected to enforced disappearance, torture, and sexual violence, indicating a hostile environment for civic actors.

### **Uganda**

- The Uganda People's Defence Forces (Amendment) Act, 2025 allows military courts to try civilians, contradicting a Supreme Court ruling and threatening judicial independence.
- The Computer Misuse Act and actions by the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) are used to criminalize dissent and silence media.
- Arbitrary arrests and abductions, such as that of Bobi Wine's body guard, highlight the erosion of rule of law and impunity for security forces.
- Journalists were assaulted, abducted, and had equipment destroyed during the Kawempe North by-election on 13 March.

### **Djibouti**

- Arbitrary arrests of human rights defenders and blogger without judicial authorization reflect a lack of legal safeguards.
- Detention of individuals for online criticism, often without formal charges, demonstrates the use of law as a tool of intimidation

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## **Freedom to express oneself and participate**



### **Tanzania**

- On 4 June, the government blocked access to social media platform X (formerly known as Twitter).
- The ban on live broadcast of witness testimonies in Tindu Lissu's trial limits public access to judicial proceedings.
- Systematic repression of CHADEMA and its supporters curtails political participation.

### **Uganda**

- Pearl FM, a local radio station, was suspended for airing reports of vote rigging.

### **Djibouti**

- The arrest of a blogger for online criticism shows suppression of digital expression.



## **Freedom to organize, associate and assemble**

### **Tanzania**

- Protests against the ruling party have been banned, and opposition party activities are heavily surveilled and restricted.
- Arbitrary arrests and travel bans on CHADEMA members hinder political organizing.

### **Uganda**

- The National Unity Platform (NUP) mobilization meetings were suspended indefinitely, stifling political organizing.
- Student protests against higher tuition fees and increasing environmental issues were met with violence and arrests.

# Activities

## Supporting Human Rights Defenders Across Borders

Between May and June 2025, the MCO collaborated with Environmental Human Rights Defenders (EHRDs) from Uganda and Tanzania to strengthen cross-border advocacy and national strategies.



## Importance of Freedom of Assembly and Association During Electoral Processes

On 25 June 2025, the MCO organized an online dialogue with the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association.



## Civic Space as a Tool for Development

From 19–20 March 2025, NANHRI, the Danish Institute on Human Rights, and non-state actors convened a workshop in Nairobi focused on nature and coastal conservation.



## Working with LGBTIQ Defenders

On 10–11 April 2025, NANHRI, CSOs, and the UN Independent Expert on SOGIE held a training in Pretoria for Southern African NHRIs.



## Recognition of Indigenous Peoples

On 27 March 2025, the MCO hosted an online dialogue featuring the UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples' Rights and CSOs to discuss about reducing inequalities and discrimination.



## Engagements with the African Union Region

Between May and June 2025, NANHRI co-hosted an AU-NANHRI Policy Dialogue in Addis Ababa with AU Organs.



## Support to Accreditation Processes

Between January and February 2025, NANHRI supported the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) undergoing review by GANHRI's Sub-Committee on Accreditation.



## Strategic Meeting with DefendDefenders on HRD Protection

On 4 February 2025, NANHRI held a strategic meeting with DefendDefenders to strengthen collaboration on HRD protection in Africa.

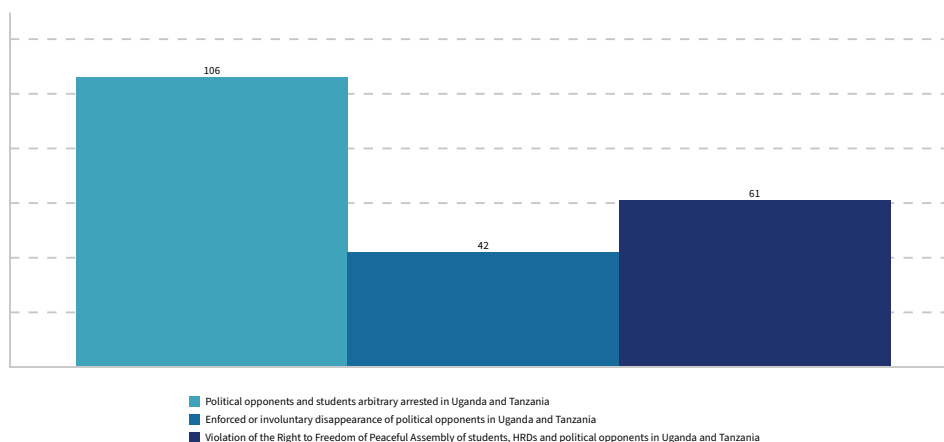


## Building stronger Environmental Human Rights Defenders Coalitions

In September 2025, the MCO brought together the EHRDs coalition of Kenya and EHRDs from Uganda and Tanzania to strengthen protection and solidarity among defenders.



## Civic space issues by the numbers\*



\*Information based on open-source monitoring done by OHCHR MCO