

# Newsletter

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*Voices  
Unmuted*



**Women Human Rights  
Defenders Confront Digital  
Violence in Tanzania**

On **7th March 2026**, a powerful and timely conversation unfolded at in Dar es Salaam, where 30 Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) gathered to mark International Women’s Day under the theme **“Digital Violence Against Women Human Rights Defenders: Protection, Accountability, and Safe Civic Engagement. #GivetoGain”**

Convened by the Coalition, the dialogue created a rare and necessary space for WHRDs to speak openly about the realities they face online realities that are often invisible, normalized, or dismissed, yet

deeply affect their safety and ability to participate in public life



### A Dialogue Rooted in Experience

The session was moderated by **Adv. Halima Sonda**, with overall moderation by **Lisa Kagaruki**, setting a tone that was both structured and open. The panel brought together diverse voices working at the intersection of media, health rights, and digital governance.

*Digital Violence Against Women Human Rights Defenders: Protection, Accountability, and Safe Civic Engagement*

#### Dr. Kuduisho Kisowile



“ an online health rights activist, highlighted the challenge of misinformation and how digital attacks can undermine both credibility and public trust. Her experience reflected a growing trend where women using digital platforms for advocacy are deliberately targeted to silence their voices. ”

#### Najma Paul



“ a journalist from Clouds Media Group, spoke candidly about the pressure women journalists face online. She described how professional reporting can quickly turn into personal attacks, particularly when covering sensitive or political issues. ”

#### Janeth Kahindi

“ from Tech and Media Convergency brought a structural perspective, pointing to gaps in digital governance and limited protection mechanisms. She emphasized that while laws exist, enforcement and awareness remain weak, leaving many women defenders exposed. ”



## Why This Conversation Matters

As civic engagement increasingly shifts to digital platforms, so do the risks. For women human rights defenders, the online space has become both a tool for advocacy and a site of targeted attacks. From harassment and misinformation to coordinated trolling and reputational harm, digital violence is now a daily concern.

What made this dialogue significant was its grounding in lived experience. It was not abstract. It was real, immediate, and personal.



## Beyond the Panel: Shared Realities

The most compelling moments came from the participants themselves. The 30 women in the room, each actively engaged in human rights work, shared personal accounts of online abuse.

Some spoke about being insulted or discredited. Others described receiving threats or being forced to withdraw from online discussions altogether. A recurring theme was self-censorship of the quiet but significant impact of digital violence.

Yet, alongside these experiences, there was also resilience. Participants exchanged practical strategies: tightening privacy settings, documenting abuse, relying on trusted networks, and,

importantly, supporting one another.

This sense of solidarity shifted the tone of the room from one of concern to one of collective strength.



## A Critical Lens: Digital Violence is a Human Rights Issue

A key takeaway from the dialogue was legal, policy, and cultural responses. It is clear: digital violence is not separate from “real” violence. It is a continuation of it. Online attacks affect mental health, professional credibility, and participation in public life. They limit freedom of expression and undermine democratic engagement. For women defenders, the cost is often higher, shaped by gender-based discrimination and societal expectations. This framing is essential for advocacy. Addressing digital violence requires not only technical solutions, but also



## A Closing Message That Resonated

The session concluded with reflections from Tike Mwambipile, Executive Director of the Tanzania Women Lawyers Association. Her remarks grounded the discussion in both reality and perspective.

She emphasized that violations online must be treated with the same seriousness as those offline, as both have real consequences on human dignity and safety.

Equally, she brought attention to mental health which is an often-overlooked dimension of digital advocacy. Her message was clear: resilience is not just about continuing work, but also about protecting one’s well-being.



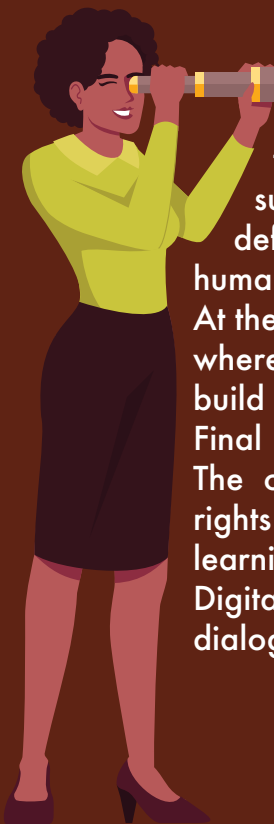
**Tike Mwambipile**

*Executive Director of the  
Tanzania Women Lawyers  
Association*

Her words struck a balance between caution and encouragement, leaving participants with a sense of clarity and reassurance



## Looking Ahead



This dialogue was not an endpoint. It was a starting point.

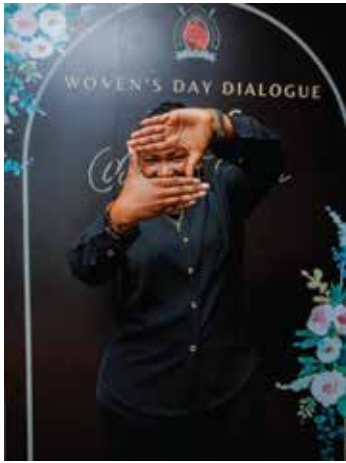
There is a clear need for continued engagement, through capacity building, stronger legal protections, and sustained support systems for women human rights defenders. Digital safety must become an integral part of human rights protection strategies.

At the same time, spaces like this must continue to exist. Spaces where women can speak freely, learn from one another, and build collective resilience.

### Final Reflection

The conversation made one thing evident: women human rights defenders are not withdrawing. They are adapting, learning, and standing firm.

Digital violence may attempt to silence them, but through dialogue, solidarity, and action, their voices remain unmuted.





"A Human Rights Defender is Better Alive than Dead"