

## **TANZANIA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS COALITION (THRDC)**



### **PRESS STATEMENT ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOM.**

#### **THIS IS YOUR RIGHT!**

While we are commemorating world press freedom of day, The Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition observe the infringing of freedom of expression and access to information due to the presence of the media governing draconian laws as well as the enactment of the new laws which infringes freedom of expression and access to information.

THRDC is not satisfied with the country's freedom of expression and access to information situation especially in democracy building which requires going along with freedom of expression and access to information as it has been declared in article 18 of the United Republic of Tanzania constitution as amended in 1977 which provides that every person has the right to enjoy freedom of opinion and expression of his ideas as well as Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which provides for everyone's right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impact information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers .

Internationally, According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), about 1200 journalists were killed from the year 1992 up to 2016 47 % being killed due to reporting on political issues, 33% for crises and war reporting and 20% for reporting on Human Rights issues. Reports show that about 61 journalists were killed in the year 2014 specifically.

While nationally in only 2015 according to THRDC Human Rights Situation report over 30 compared to 20 of 2014 cases of journalist's intimidation and threats in Tanzania were recorded, the incidences varied from physical, legal, digital and psycho-social threats respectively.

Again freedom of expression and access to information in Tanzania is facing legal challenges due to the presence of selective implementation and application of laws with draconian provisions, some dating 40 years back. These laws have been used to ban independent newspapers and prosecute and at times jail journalists who writes articles critical of government and specific authorities.

The digital threats to journalists were highly due to the passing of the Cybercrime Act in 2015 in which criminalized information deemed false, misleading inaccurate or deceptive. The coalition documented about 9 cases ever since the Cybercrime Act became operational.

However THRDC opened a case to the high court to challenge some provisions of Cybercrime Act 2015 including section 16 of the law which violets international freedom of expression and it is our hope that the Media service bills which are expected to be tabled will observe freedom of expression and rights to access of information at large.

But also the coalition is concerned about the denial of parliament live coverage which denied freedom to access information as it is their rights to participate in political issues and their rights to be widely informed on what is being discussed in the parliament.

**THRDC is calling for the following:**

**i. To the government**

- The government should have a second look on the laws which infringes freedom of expression and access to information including improving the old Laws governing media such as the 1967 Newspaper Act which is outdated.
- The government should allow the parliament sessions live coverage so that citizens will be informed on the parliament discussion as well as manage to get to see how they are represented in the parliaments by the representatives they voted.

**ii. To the media**

- Media and journalists should consider journalist security when pursuit their daily journalism works because there “is no story worth your life!”
- Join hands with the coalition of Human Rights defenders in finding a way to challenge Laws infringing freedom of expression and access to information in domestic and international Rights organs..

**iii. To the international community**

- We argue for International organs and development partners in Tanzania who have good integration with the government of Tanzania, based on the diplomatic protocol to continue advising the Government of Tanzania to respect the principles of good governance and Human Rights, particularly freedom of expression and the right to information which is the base of incorporating citizens in the operational activities of their nation.

**Issued by;**

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