

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



## **PRESS STATEMENT ON THE KILLING OF A HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER IN MOROGORO**

Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC) pathetically condemns the killing of a Human Rights Defender Mr. Godfrey Luena working to promote and protect land rights in Morogoro region. Mr. Luena was killed yesterday 22nd of February 2018 on the evening at his home in Morogoro.

Mr, Luena was a good Human Rights Defender, as he has been struggling for the protection of land rights, most particularly in Morogoro. For several years he has been fighting for the protection of village lands against proposed investments on sugarcane farming, which could lead to the loss of such lands. He has also been a client and partnered with the Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC) in defending human rights. Speaking of him, one of his colleagues (another human rights defender) said; *“Mr. Luena loved his people. He was a selfless bold hard working human rights defender.”*

It should be noted that in recent days there has been an increase of acts of grave violation of human rights, leading to the death of Human Rights Defenders, politicians and other citizens. Few days ago, the THRDC in collaboration with more than 100 other Civil Society Organizations from across the country, issued a press statement on the current situation of human rights. The press statement addressed various violations of human rights including the atrocious killing incident of the student of the National Institute of Transport (NIT) Akwilina Baftah who was shot dead by police officers who were dispersing Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (CHADEMA) supporters.

There are many other violations of human rights including the abduction, killings, torture and disappearance of people. Rule of law, democracy and political rights have been under constant threat following unfair treatment by enforcement organs, while media houses have been banned or heavily penalized for publishing information which criticize government authorities.

As the motto of our Coalition says "**Human Rights Defender is better alive than dead**", there comes a need to protect these human rights defenders against any kind of threat.

### **Our Call:**

- i. The Government, through the Police Force, should make sure that they conduct a thorough investigation over the incident and arrest the perpetrators of such inhuman acts so that legal measures are taken against them.
- ii. Government and all security agencies should assure us of the security of Human Rights Defenders due to the fact that not all people enjoy the work we are doing.
- iii. We urge civil society organizations, governmental organizations, parliamentarians, politicians, other organizations and stakeholders to continue raising their voice and join together to fight for justice, rule of law, democracy and peace of the country mostly in this period where there have been increased incidents of human rights violations.
- iv. All Citizens should be at the front line to report incidents of human rights violations, and crimes, including various controversial killings to the Police Force and to Human Rights Defenders. The duty of protecting human rights is to all of us; it is not only for lawyers, human rights defenders, and officials of state agencies or leaders at various levels.

### **Conclusion**

The Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania under Article 14 states that "*Every person has the right to live and to the protection of his life by the society in accordance with the law*". Article 8 (1) (c) of the Constitution further states that, "*The United Republic of Tanzania is a state which adheres to the principles of democracy and social justice, and therefore - the Government shall be accountable to the people*". According to the state of security in the country, the government has a constitutional duty to provide security for such rights. Events that have taken place must be given due weight because if these illegal acts persists Tanzania will lose its long-term reputation as "the island of peace". We should remember that there is no country in the world that has ever allowed such violations to persist and it has managed to remain safe.

The THRDC offer condolences to the family, relatives and friends of Mr. Godfrey Luena and all who lost their loved ones during this period of unprecedented atrocities.

May the soul of the deceased rest in eternal peace. AMEN!

Issued today on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February 2018

By:

**Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition - THRDC**