



## Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition [THRDC]

P. O. Box 105926 Dar es Salaam, Tanzania  
Mob: +255 769 642 208 E-mail; [info@thrdc.or.tz](mailto:info@thrdc.or.tz)  
Website: [www.thrdc.or.tz](http://www.thrdc.or.tz)

### PRESS STATEMENT ON CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS (CSOs) PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS ELECTIONS

#### Introduction

We members of the Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC), participating in the annual general conference of members, are saddened by the state of low participation of Civil Society Organisations in the entire process of the Local Governments election expected to be held on 24 November 2019. Due to various challenges; including the delay or lack of permits for CSO participation in civic education for the voters and election oversight, CSO participation has been witnessed to be very minimal.

#### Challenges of CSO Participation in the Elections.

Over the past several months the coalition has witnessed various challenges affecting the participation of Human Rights Defenders / CSOs in our country during elections and other democratic processes. Some of these challenges include:

- i. A negative public perception on the work done by Human Rights Defenders which includes, among other things, limited awareness of the rights of Human Rights Defenders in Tanzania;
- ii. Human Rights Defenders have been branded with various names that destroy their public image, for example to be called Politicians. This has also been attributed to the actions of some human rights defenders, who have wittingly or unwittingly been participating in direct political activities such as campaigning in elections and contesting political positions while still holding their leadership positions in CSOs;
- iii. Some Government Leaders' failure to distinguish between illegal political activities and other legitimate activities carried out by CSOs without the support of any political party.
- iv. Difficulty in obtaining the accreditation from the relevant authority for providing voter education, monitoring and election oversight; and,
- v. Delays in granting accreditation and failure to receive a formal letter responding to their requests for participation in the provision of civic education or
- vi. Lack of sufficient funds for the implementation of various activities during elections.

#### Board of Directors:

Ms. Vicky Ntetema, Michael Kyande, Kenneth Simbaya, Deogratius Nsokolo, Maxence Melo, Christina Kamili, Jamila M. Juma, Hassan Kh. Juma, Edwin Soko.

*Defending Human Rights is not a Crime!*

For several years we haven't had formal rules that would provide guidance on how members of the THRDC and Human Rights Defenders can work effectively and without favouring any party in the elections and other democratic processes in Tanzania. This situation has provoked a litany of complaints against Human Rights Defenders who are accused of involving themselves in direct political activities. Over the past few years, the Coalition recognized the challenge and through its new Strategic Plan for the Year (2018-2022), the Coalition has decided to create formal rules that will serve as a guideline for Human Rights Defenders when engaging in various activities during elections and other democratic processes.

In addition, it has been noted that during previous elections, Human Rights Defenders faced numerous security incidents such as, attacks, arrests, kidnappings, threats and other similar incidents. To prevent such challenges, the Coalition has decided to develop these principles to serve as guideline for THRDC members and Human Rights Defenders in such activities.

The years 2019 and 2020 are special years for the democracy in our country. This is because two main elections are expected to be held within this period. By the end of 2019 our nation will be holding its Local Government Elections, which will be followed by the General Election in 2020. These elections come in the wake of the 2015 general elections that put the 5th phase government, under President John Pombe Magufuli in power.

As we are heading to the local government elections on November 24, 2019 and subsequently the general election in 2020, the Coalition has seen a significant increase of the challenges affecting the work of Human Rights Defenders / CSOs as they try to carry out their normal activities in elections. Some of these challenges include the difficulty and complexity of Human Rights Defenders / CSOs to obtain accreditation from the relevant authorities for the purpose of providing civic education, monitoring and election oversight.

According to our due diligence survey conducted by the Coalition, out of the 86 CSOs that had been reached, eighteen (18) organizations sought approval from the President's Office Regional Administration and Local Governments to provide civic education to voters. Out of those 18 only four (4) organizations have been allowed to provide voters' civic education.

Surveys also showed that out of the 86 CSOs reached, 14 CSOs requested permission for elections monitoring and observing. Of those, only two (2) have been authorized to monitor and observe the up-coming local government elections this year.

Another challenge for CSOs' participation in elections has been the lack of sufficient funds to enable them to participate effectively in carrying out the required activities. Of the 86 organizations that have been reached in the survey, only four (4) have received funding from affiliates for the provision of civic education to voters and only 6 have received funding for observing and monitoring of the local government elections.

**Board of Directors:**

Ms. Vicky Ntetema, Michael Kyande, Kenneth Simbaya, Deogratius Nsokolo, Maxence Melo, Christina Kamili, Jamila M. Juma, Hassan Kh. Juma, Edwin Soko.

*Defending Human Rights is not a Crime!*

However, despite all these challenges several CSOs have continued to perform various duties during the electoral process through various CSO networks. Of the 86 CSOs reached in the survey, over 50 CSOs have engaged in electoral activities by working through their CSO networks.

Despite these challenges we have also seen many opposition parties withdrawing themselves from the 2019 local government elections. Among the reasons for the withdrawal have been described as dissatisfaction and their reservations about the process of nominating candidates from different parties.

### **Our Call**

i. Considering all the challenges that affect Human Rights Defenders / CSOs during elections; It is high time now for Human Rights Defenders / CSOs across the country to use the Code of Ethics launched by the Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition in Tanzania to restore the good reputation of Human Rights Defenders / CSOs.

ii. CSOs should continue to take appropriate steps to ensure that all ethical issues that need to be addressed by Human Rights Defenders / CSOs are dealt with appropriately. The Code of Conduct for Human Rights Defenders in elections will serve as a good guidance for Human Rights Defenders throughout the elections and all democratic processes.

iii. We advise the ministry responsible for the Office of the Regional Administration and Local Government to ensure that it provides permits to provide civic education to voters and allows CSOs to exercise oversight of organizations that have expressed interest in performing these functions;

iv. We urge the President Office ministry of Regional Administration and Local Governments to ensure that it takes appropriate steps to ensure that all irregularities and defects that have arisen in preparation for this local government elections are rectified.

v. We urge the Ministry of Regional and Local Government under the President's Office to disclose statistics about the number of CSOs applying for permits of providing civic education and to monitor elections so that the Tanzanian public know the number of organizations that have applied for, approved and those that have been refused from participating in such elections.

vi. Civil society organizations that have obtained permits for providing civic education and election monitoring must ensure that they continue to perform these functions professionally to ensure that elections are conducted in accordance with the Constitution and laws of the United Republic of Tanzania.

#### **Board of Directors:**

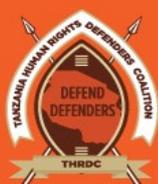
Ms. Vicky Ntetema, Michael Kyande, Kenneth Simbaya, Deogratius Nsokolo, Maxence Melo, Christina Kamili, Jamila M. Juma, Hassan Kh. Juma, Edwin Soko.

*Defending Human Rights is not a Crime!*

vii. CSOs that have expressed interest to observe and monitor the election and provide voter education should continue to make a follow up on their applications in the relevant ministries so that the ministry can provide answers.

viii. We are on the verge of the elections when many parties have boycotted from getting involved in the electoral process, so we the members of CSO and Human Rights Defenders are calling upon the government to form a reconciliation committee between declared parties, religious leaders and the government.

ix. A reconciliation committee should be formed immediately before the campaign begins and the elections should be moved forward for a week to allow all parties to participate.



## Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition [THRDC]

P. O. Box 105926 Dar es Salaam, Tanzania  
Mob: +255 769 642 208 E-mail; [info@thrdc.or.tz](mailto:info@thrdc.or.tz)  
Website: [www.thrdc.or.tz](http://www.thrdc.or.tz)

**Presented at the Annual General Meeting**

**November 16, 2019**

**By Members of the Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition**

### Board of Directors:

Ms. Vicky Ntetema, Michael Kyande, Kenneth Simbaya, Deogratius Nsokolo, Maxence Melo, Christina Kamili, Jamila M. Juma, Hassan Kh. Juma, Edwin Soko.

*Defending Human Rights is not a Crime!*