

PIK NEWSLETTER

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I AM AT RISK - ABDUL NONDO

Before March 2018, Abdul Omary Nondo had his life and studies lined up, just like any other university student. A third-year undergraduate in Political Science and Public Administration who was also the Chairperson of the Tanzania Students Networking Programme (TSNP) at the time, Abdul was also an activist, and a human rights defender. He defended his fellow students' rights at all levels. He most notably called out the Minister of Home Affairs at the time Dr. Mwigulu Nchemba to resign on 18th February 2018 in TSNP's Press Statement condemning the heinous shooting of an innocent NIT student Akwilina Akwiline on a bus by police during a political demonstration.

A month later, in the late evening hours on 7th March 2018, student Abdul Nondo was abducted by unknown assailants around Ubungu area in Dar es Salaam as he was crossing the road. As he was being abducted, he promptly sent a text message to one of his friends reading: "I am at risk" as an alert of his safety. After questioning the abductors as to where he was being taken, why and under whose orders, he got no response, instead he was beaten up and questioned about his involvement with opposition party leaders, Freeman Mbowe and Zitto Kabwe. At some point during the beating, he lost consciousness and later woke up in a forest seeking not knowing where he was, and seeking help. A Good Samaritan told him that he is in Mafinga - Iringa region.

When Abdul went to seek help from the nearest police station and report about his abduction, the whole saga took a dramatic turn. Much to his surprise, the police treated him as a suspect, and not a victim and charged him on two counts of: publication of False Information contrary to section 16 of the Cyber Crime Act, No 14 of 2015; giving false information to the person employed in the public service contrary to section 122(a) of the Penal Code, CAP 16R.E 2002.

Following these charges, Abdul was suspended from campus because of an on-going criminal case against him. Human Rights Organizations such as Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC) and Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC) supported Abdul throughout his case proceedings. After several case hearings in Iringa region, having a team of advocates from THRDC involved, Abdul was finally acquitted of all charges on 5th November 2018.

A Cheering Cry

After winning his case, in 2019 Abdul got back to school and successfully completed his Bachelor's Degree in Political Science and Public Administration at the University of Dar es Salaam. His efforts in defending human rights and civic space in Tanzania remains resolute.

Abdul Nondo is now a human rights defender, defending political rights and a politician under Alliance for Change and Transparency (ACT – Wazalendo) Party.

*“The greatest cheer comes after the hardest cry!
A proud family!”*



RAMLA'S VICTORIOUS BATTLE AGAINST TELEZA

Just a few kilometres outside Kigoma Ujiji municipality, media uncovered a series of vicious rape incidents in Mwanga Kusini ward, dating as far back as 2014. In May 2019, Ramla Hassan, a rural woman human rights defender from Mwanga Kusini ward in Kigoma region, finally decided to stand up for women, girls, widows and even old women – victims of TELEZA attacks. TELEZA which roughly translates to ‘slippery’, was a nickname notoriously given to rapists who broke in naked into female-only households of human rights defenders and other residents at night, covered in a greasy substance – wielding machetes - and forced helpless women to give in to rape. In the event that their victims would try to grab hold of them, they would slip away, because of their greased bodies, and ran. Often, they would leave their victims wounded, sometimes fatally.

Ramla Hassan crying as she was narrating TELEZA Saga to the media.

Many TELEZA victims and survivors were hesitant to come out about these violations, but that was not the case for Ramla Hassan, who despite facing obvious threats from the perpetrators, ran a local campaign named “Tokomeza Teleza Kigoma” to seek help from authorities and raised awareness about TELEZA starting with an exclusive interview with one of online medias in Tanzania. This media succeeded in spreading the news to the public and the authorities became aware of the situation in that district. Cooperatively, authorities took an initiative to end TELEZA torture to Kigoma women.

Ramla fearing for her life and safety, she sought relocation support from the human rights organizations in Tanzania. She was successfully relocated for the sake of her safety and after the situation stabilized, she went back home and continued with her work. Today, Ramla is safe and the TELEZA saga is history.



2020: THE YEAR THRDC OPERATIONS WAVERED

A sudden turn on the usual flow of operations to human rights defenders and human rights defender organization in Tanzania was experienced from the year 2019. Setting bars to limit operations through enactment of guidelines and amendment of laws that guide CSOs in Tanzania was done. These are some of the many signs of shrinking civic space during the Magufuli era.

One of the most prominent human rights defenders organization in Tanzania, Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC) started experiencing direct intimidations by the authorities from mid-2020. One time while preparing to conduct a training to new members and HRDs, the police showed up, stopped the training saying that matters of safety and security are handled by the police force only, and arrested two members of THRDC staff.

THRDC was a lead of a consortium of CSOs Directors in Tanzania. The main goal was to discuss all development matters of the country and matters affecting the civic space of Tanzania and charting a way forward for tackling them. In 2020, THRDC received a letter from Registrar's office, ordering the Coalition to no longer take a lead of the consortium. This was frustrating to directors of CSOs in Tanzania, because through this consortium, many developments were initiated.

The biggest hit for the Coalition was the freezing of their accounts. On 18th August 2020, THRDC issued a public statement on the temporary suspension of its operations in Tanzania as it sought reconciliation with the Police Force. The statement issued read as follows;

“Dear members and stakeholders, following an emergency Board of directors meeting, the Board has come into conclusion to temporarily suspend the Coalition's operations until further notice. The board apologises to its members and stakeholders for the inconveniences caused by the decision including the delay in payments and such related issues... It was due to this, THRDC on Saturday sought assistance from the bank, and we came to realise that the account was blocked by the bank—on orders by the Police Force pending interrogation” THRDC Board Chairperson Ms Vicky Ntetema.

Several organizations and HRDs aired their voices concerning this matter, but it remained unsuccessful for several months. The accounts were frozen for eight months.

Just 33 days after the death of “The Bulldozer” John Pombe Magufuli, THRDC issued a public statement on the unfreezing of their bank accounts by the authorities. Some say that most of the witnessed issues that shrunk the civic space in Tanzania were an initiative of the bulldozer.



TAXATION: WHAT'S THE CONTRIBUTION OF CSOS?

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) that includes Human Rights Organizations (HRO) in Tanzania urged the Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA) to take relevant steps to address challenges affecting CSOs under the Tax Regime in Tanzania during the 5th CSOs Directors Annual Reflection Meeting in Mwanza.

More than 120 CSOs Directors met for two days (13th-14th October 2019) to discuss key issues affecting their operation in the Country. It was 5th Annual Directors Reflection meeting and the theme this year was "Taxation of Civil Society Organizations and their Contribution to National Development: Unattended Misconception and Policy Dilemma". It was a continuance of discussions and observations from the 2018 Directors Forum, where it was observed that there are many challenges, which affect CSOs as well as the need to address them effectively. Some of these challenges include CSOs' lack of knowledge about tax laws and issues of compliance with the laws governing CSOs and the issue of acquiring charitable status.

In addition to the current challenges in complying with Tax laws, CSOs and HROs are also facing the challenge in tracking their contribution to national development, leading them to be regarded unimportant TRA thus contributing to the shrinking civic space. CSOs have been doing a very commendable job in different thematic areas including defending human rights, advocacy in different fields and also a provision of social services in our communities. However, despite the fact that a lot is being done, it has remained very difficult to track their contribution to national development. Therefore, the 2019 CSOs Directors Reflection Meeting provided an avenue for discussion on how to track and record the contribution of CSOs in the national development.

The main objective of the meeting was to bring together CSOs Directors to strategize on how to improve CSOs' compliance with practical aspects of the Tax Laws of the country. Other objectives included: Providing a forum for civil society sector self-reflection with the view to improve CSOs' internal governance and compliance with the national tax laws; to familiarize CSOs Directors with Tax Laws and how to effectively comply with them, and share experiences on the way compliance with tax laws is observed in various organizations.

Tanzanian Government and TRA have been congratulated due to an unprecedented increase in tax collection. On the 3rd of October 2019, the Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA) reported to have recorded an amount of Tshs. 1.767 Trillion for the month of September 2019. According to TRA, the amount collected for this one month of September is equivalent to 97.20 percent of Tshs. 1.817 Trillion, which was the target for the month. CSOs' contribution to National Development is undeniable. Due to this contribution, CSOs have requested therefore that its high time for the sector's value to be officially recognized in the National Development Plans, Reports and Strategies