



COMMEMORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DEMOCRACY

The Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC), join all Tanzanians to commemorate the International Day of Democracy. It should be noted that, the International Day of Democracy is commemorated on 15th September every year. This is a special day which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007 in order to remind all nations the importance of upholding and supporting principles of democracy. The main theme in this year's momentous day is **“Strengthening Democratic Resilience in the Face of Future Crises”**.

In today's commemoration, we recognize the importance of democracy, good governance, and respect for human rights at various levels in order to ensure sustainability in development to both, the nation and its people.

The foundation of democracy and human rights is recognized in various International Covenants and Treaties such as the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and the Africa Union Treaty on Democracy, Elections and Governance of 2007. Among other things, the African treaty on Democracy under Article 4 urges Member States of the African Union to ensure that they uphold democratic principles of the Rule of Law and Human Rights. Article 3 of the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania, recognize the fact that Tanzania is a democratic country, therefore the government should make its decisions on the basis of democratic principles which require *inter alia* peoples centered decisions.

As a Member State of the United Nations, and the African Union, Tanzania has the responsibility to ensure that democratic principles and good governance are upheld. Along with various reforms which are still going on in our country in various legislations and democratic systems, there are still a lot of grievances from the people and human rights defenders at various levels of democratic processes and good governance. For example, in order to ensure that the democratic rights are respected, the Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition has been closely following up on the participation of human rights defenders to ensure that they fully participate in democratic processes. In the 2019 and 2020 General Elections, the participation of Civil Society Organizations in those elections was low. For instance, Civil Society Organizations that were accredited to provide electoral education and to observe the General Election in 2020, in Tanzania mainland were only 345. This number is very low compared to 444 which were accredited to provide electoral education and election observation in 2015. Following

the fact that there was insufficient participation of the citizens and various stakeholders of democracy in the 2020 General Elections, the election did not reflect the presence of true democracy considering that, Tanzania is a multiparty country.

Apart from poor participation of the people and Human Rights Defenders in the elections and other democratic processes, there has also been some gaps in respect to Rule of Law and Good Governance. The presence of laws that infringe freedom of expression, access to information and freedom of participation are challenging and deterring citizens from enjoying democracy in the country.

We have witnessed some political parties being allowed to hold political rallies while others are barred from conducting the same. In the 2020 elections, political parties complained about the lack of participatory elections due lack of adherence to democratic principles. There has been an outcry that the results of the 2020 General Election did not reflect a multi-party system in a democratic country. Citizens relies on representation that reflects political system. Thus, citizens in Tanzania rely representation which reflects our democracy. All democratic processes should be participatory.

Therefore, the government is supposed to closely observe principles of democracy including inclusive citizen participation, freedom of assembly, and access to information. Human rights are the foundation of democracy and the development of any nation. For any nation to prosper, the fundamentals of human rights must be respected in order to achieve sustainable development.

THRDC'S CALL FOR DEMOCRACY:

In order to improve the democracy and good governance in the country, the Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC) would like to recommend the following:

- i. The government of the United Republic of Tanzania is advised to ratify various regional and international treaties on democracy, such as the African Union Treaty on Democracy, Elections and Governance of 2007.
- ii. We advise the government to uphold and respect principles of democracy and human rights in accordance with the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania, regional and international treaties.
- iii. We advise the government to respect rules and laws that upholds constitutional principles to ensure that rule law flourishes in the country.
- iv. The government is advised to enact laws which create an enabling environment for participation of Human Rights Defenders and all citizens in election and other democratic processes.

- v. We Human Rights Defenders strongly believe that the recent directives of the President of the United Republic of Tanzania about various rights of the people especially the rights of the accused persons and reforms to the criminal justice system, will be addressed by respective authorities. We therefore call upon leaders in various government authorities including the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Constitution and Legal Affairs and their departments to ensure that they collect opinion from the citizens and other stakeholders so as to make changes in polices and laws that govern democratic systems and dispensation of justice in the country.
- vi. We call upon the government of Tanzania to reconsider its decision to withdraw from the clause that allows individuals and non-governmental organizations to file petitions in the African Court of Human and Peoples' Rights.
- vii. We advise the government to consider the public outcry on the need to revitalize constitution making process.
- viii. Political parties are advised to adhere to democratic principles within their parties at all times including respecting laws and regulations of the nation, freedom to participate in various party activities, freedom of expression and inclusive decision-making.
- ix. We advise the government to develop a culture of conducting regular dialogues with key actors including religious groups, Civil Society Organizations, Private Sector and the citizens in general.

**Issued by:-
Onesmo Olengurumwa,
National Coordinator,
The Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
15.09.2021**