



## **PRESS STATEMENT**

### **DEBRIEFING SESSION REGARDING**

### **WHAT WAS PRESENTED TO THE DELEGATION OF DR. LAZARUS CHAKWERA, SPECIAL ENVOY OF THE COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY-GENERAL, REGARDING TANZANIA ELECTION VIOLENCE OF OCTOBER 29, 2025**

**Dar es Salaam, April 17, 2026**

**Date:** Friday, 17 April 2026

**Time:** 11:00 hours

**Venue:** TWaweza Afrika Mashariki Ni SiSi

#### **Summary**

The purpose of this event is to conduct a public interest debriefing session involving representatives from media houses, civil society organisations, members of the legal profession, and other individuals who actually participated or those interested in the consultations with the Commonwealth Secretary-General's Special Envoy. The Envoy is currently in Tanzania to assess and collect data and information on incidents of killings, injuries, and destruction of property related to the 29 October 2025 general elections. The Debriefing session was conducted at TWaweza East Africa – Ni SiSi Conference room.

#### **Key Speakers**

1. Ms. Rosemary Mwakitwange – Chairperson, CCCP/TG-MSG
2. Bubelwa Kaiza – Convener, Tanzania Transparency Forum
3. Deus Kibamba – Independent expert, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution
4. Dr. Azaveli Lwaitama – Independent expert, Communication and Critical Thinking Skills

Each speaker is expected to brief the audience on the observations and submissions they presented during sessions with the Commonwealth Secretary-General's Special Envoy regarding the investigation into killings, injuries, and destruction of property during and after the 29 October 2025 general elections.

This press conference aims to inform the Tanzanian public about the presence and mandate of the Commonwealth mission in Tanzania, as well as to provide clarity on the discussions that took place during consultative meetings between the Envoy and stakeholders at the United Nations Offices in Dar es Salaam. It also seeks to respond to the public's legitimate interest in understanding what transpired during those engagements.

## Expected Outcome

It is anticipated that this debriefing session will encourage Tanzanians with relevant information on incidents of killings, injuries, and destruction of property during and after the 29 October elections to voluntarily submit such information to the Commonwealth investigative mechanism. This will support the preparation and publication of a credible report, contribute to constitutionally and legally grounded accountability, and advance a meaningful process of national healing and reconciliation.

## Material Presentations

### 1. Chair's Opening Statement

Your Excellency Dr. Lazarus Chakwera, Commonwealth Secretary-General's Special Envoy to the Tanzania October 29 election violence investigative mission; and

Distinguished Members of the Delegation,

It is my honor to formally introduce the **Tanzania Governance Multi-Stakeholders Group (TG-MSG)** – a civil society-led coalition of eminent professionals, experts and leaders working in public policy research, civil society development, private sector, academia, media and governance generally, committed to advancing democratic integrity, accountability, and inclusive development in the United Republic of Tanzania.

#### 1.1 Historical Overview

The Tanzania Governance Multi-Stakeholders Group is a multi-sectoral governance platform comprising five thematic panels that provide strategic direction, technical oversight, and accountability to a professionally managed Programme Management Team (PMT).

Established in November 2025 by Tanzanian civil society researchers, experts, and leaders, TG-MSG was formed in response to concerns arising from human rights violations and election-related violence associated with the events of 29 October 2025.

TG-MSG is committed to mobilising and coordinating national, regional, and international stakeholders to work collaboratively towards restoring sustainable peace, security, and democratic governance in Tanzania.

TG-MSG structure is designed to ensure clear separation between governance and management; collective strategic leadership; technical depth across thematic areas; accountability and financial integrity; and institutional sustainability beyond a single intervention. We members of this delegation represent the Conceptual Clarity and Content Panel (CCCP) of the TG-MSG.

## 1.2 Governance Architecture

TG-MSG is governed with five thematic panels architecture, namely Conceptual Clarity and Content Panel (CCCP); Research, Advocacy and Media Panel (RAMP); Movement Outreach and Networking Panel (MONP); Resource Mobilization and Budget Oversight Panel (BOP); and Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Panel (MEALP).

We are available to provide additional information about the TG-MSG when so required. As we convene today, although are quite aware about the general context of this meeting, it is our humble request to be enlightened about the approach and methodology of the Commonwealth engagement with stakeholders in Tanzania, regarding the October 29, events. Our major concern, and would very much like to help on this, is the type and quality of audience, geographical reach, and frequencies of stakeholders' meetings to ensure your team is optimally served during your stay.

## 1.3 Proposed Areas for Investigation

Your Excellency,

While we understand that your visit to Tanzania is anchored in the mandate of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG), as reflected in its statement of 7 March 2026 – which welcomed Tanzania's commitment to receive and facilitate the Secretary-General's Special Envoy – and that your current itinerary is therefore likely fixed, TG-MSG, drawing on local knowledge and experience, wishes to share with your team insights into the genesis of the hostile election-related violence that culminated on 29 October 2025. Unlike the usual political behaviors of competitive electoral politics, the Tanzania state party, which incidentally is the incumbent, subverted the constitution, the election law and the election management bodies.

Moreover, we would like to share with the Commonwealth investigative mission team about the eleven (11) areas most adversely affected by events of October 29, 2025. Election violence and brutality events were most visible in the places of Geita, Katoro, Iringa, Tarime, Kahama, Mwanza, Arusha, Dar es Salaam, Mbeya, Tunduma and Bunda. We would humbly and strongly recommend that the investigative mission team visits and collects evidence from those places, especially conducting fact finding meetings with local religious leaders, amongst others. We also advise that the interventions extend to locations and areas outside the major cities for inclusivity.

## 1.4 Target Audience

To understand the context of the post-election violence there is compelling evidence showing the youth, dubbed Gen-Zs generation, was the most affected section of the population – most of them wounded or shot dead, whose bodies could not be recovered for burial with human dignity. Moreover, 2045 youths were arrested and charged for treason although by December 2025, 1151 charges had been dropped (LHRC, 2025) for immateriality.

Your Excellency, Tanzania Diaspora is another significant political society that was affected by the October 29 violence, hence TG-MSG would humbly request the Commonwealth investigative mission team reach out to this group, at least through one of their vocal group; Sauti ya Watanzania (SYW).



## **1.5 Methodology vs Content**

Your Excellency,

At TG-MSG, we have deliberately chosen to focus our engagement on the methodology of your investigative mission rather than its substantive findings. This reflects our strong conviction that a rigorous, independent, and transparent fact-finding approach will ultimately lead to credible conclusions and meaningful recommendations for remedial action.

We respectfully note that, should the Government of Tanzania be widely perceived by citizens as responsible for the events of October 29, 2025, any impression of alignment or undue proximity between the mission and the Government could risk undermining the mission's credibility, relevance, and public trust.

As representatives of a broad spectrum of civil society organisations, we express our confidence in you and your team. It is our sincere hope that the mission will achieve its intended objectives—thereby meeting the expectations of the Tanzanian people and helping to lay a solid foundation for a genuine national healing process.

## **1.6 Conclusion**

As I conclude this note, please allow me to reiterate what the TG-MSG considers constitute expectations of the people of Tanzania from the Commonwealth intervention. Tanzanians want to know;

1.5.1 The person who ordered armed men and women to 'shoot and kill' unarmed demonstrators exercising their constitutional right to protest against what they considered premeditated rigged elections.

1.5.2 The legality of the order of the Inspector General of Police to declare the state of emergency on October 29, 2025 – innocent citizens obeying state of emergency order were hunted and killed at homes; concurrently/simultaneously across the entire country – certainly that wasn't coincident.

1.5.3 The authority or government agency, which coordinated the operation schemed to quash the October 29, 2025 election demonstrations.

1.5.4 The number and identities (disaggregated by sex, age and place of origin) of Tanzanians killed or wounded during the October 29, 2025 election violence, and immediately after.

1.5.5 Places where the mysteriously missing dead bodies were buried or cremated so their respective families conduct formal dignified burials.

We thank the Commonwealth mission for contributing towards Tanzania's reconciliation endeavors.

## **2. Individual CCCP Members' Contributions to the Conversation**

### **Additional recommendations to Commonwealth Secretary General's Special Envoy on the 29 October 2025 Election Violence in Tanzania, UN Building, PSSSF Commercial Complex, Dar Es Salaam**

By

Bubelwa E. Kaiza

Your Excellency,

Immediately following the Chair's delivery of our open statement, I would like to offer a few additional remarks and, where appropriate, recommendations. These are partly in response to Your Excellency Dr. Lazarus Chakwera's questions regarding the state of civic space in Tanzania, the legal and regulatory framework governing political activity, and the situation of detained persons to date.

By way of brief background, I bring over 33 years of experience as both a practitioner and analyst in civil society. In addition to postgraduate training in NGOs, civil society, and social movements, my work has included conducting anti-corruption perception surveys and bribery indices; supporting the establishment of district-level anti-corruption oversight networks in more than 78 districts; co-pioneering national citizen election observation coalitions; and co-founding and coordinating the Great Lakes Peace and Security Network (PeSeNet). I currently serve as a policy advisor to the RAIA Ni SISI movement – representing smallholder farmers, fishers, pastoralists, and artisanal miners, who together constitute approximately 92% of Tanzania's population – while also convening the Tanzania Governance Multi-Stakeholders Group (TG-MSG) through the Tanzania Transparency Forum (TRAFO), its administrative host.

It is on the basis of this experience that I respectfully submit the following observations and recommendations:

2.1 The operational landscape for NGOs in Tanzania is constrained by a restrictive policy and legal environment. Key frameworks include the NGOs Act (Amendment, 2019), the Media Services Act (2016), the Statistics Act (2019 and 2025), the Electronic and Postal Communications Act (Online Content Regulations, 2020), and the Cybercrimes Act (2015). Collectively, these laws present significant barriers to the growth, independence, and effectiveness of civil society organisations.

The NGOs (Amendment) Act, 2019, for instance, contains provisions that are viewed as discriminatory toward certain entities, including religious organisations, and does not adequately recognise NGOs as going concerns. Notably, registration is limited to a ten-year period, after which renewal is subject to the discretion of the Registrar, thereby creating uncertainty around institutional continuity.

The Media Services Act, 2016, has also been widely criticised for undermining progressive standards such as those embodied in the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights’ Model Law on Access to Information for Africa.

In addition, the broader operating environment is affected by concerns over security, including reports of enforced disappearances. As of August 2025, over 200 Tanzanian citizens were reported to have disappeared – allegedly abducted, tortured, or killed (Tanganyika Law Society, 2025).

Taken together, the current legal, political, and security context constrains civic space, limits meaningful participation, and undermines fundamental freedoms. This underscores the urgent need to advocate for a more enabling environment – one that allows NGOs to operate freely, sustainably, and with greater impact.

2.2 On several occasions between 2023 and 2025, President Samia Suluhu Hassan was heard and quoted in the media during her regular meetings with security and defense organs—held in Dar es Salaam, Arusha, Dodoma, and Kilimanjaro—telling police officers and even the military that the government had set aside a special budget for them for the 2025 general elections.

From a policy and legal standpoint, these plans had significant shortcomings because, under the Constitution and the laws of the country, all security forces are not supposed to engage in political activities.

The consequences of President Samia’s statements and commitments to the security forces included police involvement in the 2025 general elections, where they issued policing directives nationwide from January to December 2025. These actions appeared to favor Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) and its endorsed candidates over opposition candidates.

During and after the election campaigns, the police even interfered with the functions of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The police and other security organs issued orders that were contrary to the Election Act No. 1 of 2024—for example, preventing candidates from submitting their nomination forms at INEC offices.

2.3 Tanzania’s Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) bears partial responsibility for the events of October 29 and early November 2025. The Election Management Body acted unlawfully by violating the Election Act No. 1 of 2024, particularly by establishing a Code of Ethics Committees Regulation in a manner inconsistent with Section 162 of the parent law. This appears to have been done with the effect – if not the intent – of excluding the main opposition party, Chama Cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (CHADEMA), from participating in the 2025

General Elections. This decision generated widespread public anger, particularly among young people, many of whom supported the party. Furthermore, INEC imposed premature endorsement requirements on political parties, and when CHADEMA insisted on legal compliance, it was subsequently disqualified from participating in the general elections.

2.4 In a similar vein, INEC denied accreditation to credible citizen election observation organisations and coalitions, thereby preventing them from independently organising and conducting election observation. This pattern is not new; it dates back to the 2020 elections, when the same body denied accreditation to established national observer groups such as the Tanzania Civil Society Consortium on Election Observation (TACCEO), which was ultimately forced to return donor funds and disband. In light of reports by election observer missions, including those of the African Union and the Southern African Development Community, suggesting that no meaningful election took place on polling day, these concerns warrant serious attention. We therefore recommend that the Commonwealth investigative mission explicitly flag this issue and consider strong, reform-oriented recommendations.

2.5 INEC also appears to have facilitated a scheme that undermined the true will of voters, as reflected in inconsistencies between the Election Act – The Presidential, Parliamentary and Councillors’ Elections Act, No. 1 of 2024 – and the Election Regulations of 2025. Section 102(d) and (e) of the Act clearly requires that votes be counted and results declared at each polling station; that party agents be provided with copies of the results; and that results be publicly displayed at the polling station for voters to see. However, Regulation 52 – intended to operationalise this provision – focuses instead on recording and transmitting results forms (Forms 21A, 21B, and 21C) to tallying centres at various administrative levels, without ensuring transparency at the polling station level. This discrepancy raises serious concerns about the integrity of the electoral process and suggests the possibility of deliberate manipulation. We recommend that the Commonwealth mission considers both corrective and accountability-focused measures in this regard.

2.6 The judiciary is also perceived by many stakeholders as having contributed to the shortcomings of the 2025 electoral process. In May 2025, two citizens filed an application before the High Court of Tanzania seeking judicial intervention on issues similar to those outlined in section 2.1 above. However, in July 2025, the Court dismissed the application, holding that citizens (as voters), unlike political parties, lacked sufficient legal interest in matters of electoral compliance (Miscellaneous Civil Application No. 000012670 of 2025). The ruling characterised the applicants as “mere neighbours” without standing to sue.

Similarly, Judicial Review Application No. 32537 of 2025—challenging the President’s decision to establish a Commission of Inquiry into the 2025 election violence – was also dismissed by the High Court. Copies of both rulings are appended for reference.

These observations are offered in the spirit of constructive engagement, with the aim of supporting a credible, independent, and impactful investigative process.

By

Following a very warm reception and welcome, the TG-MSG team was allowed into the Envoy's Meeting room. A round of introductions was then executed, starting with the Commonwealth Envoy's delegation. On our part, the TG-MSG team took the opportunity to introduce the Group and to also highlight the credentials of the four members present: Rosemary Mwakitwange, Bubelwa E. Kaiza, Deus Kibamba and Azaveli Feza Lwaitama.

I was third in taking the floor to make my remarks. Leveraging from the opening and introductory remarks made by Rosemary and Bubelwa, my take off was in response to a list of questions put forward to us by the Envoy. It was submitted that Civic space has terribly shrunk in the country. In terms of way forwards, it was proposed that the Mission recommends:

2.7 Tanzania should consider going the Interim-transition government arrangement with immediate effect, so that major reforms can be jointly planned and instituted across the political spectrum. Such reforms can hardly succeed if single-handed managed under the sole coordination of the current status quo (ie. Merger of CCM-government-security institutions cartel). Ruling CCM's monopolistic tendencies have bred a culture of excessive arrogance that has been very disturbing to the public. Going forward, all key democracy stakeholders will need to be properly represented in the execution of any of the reforms to come.

2.8 A forensic investigation is necessary now rather than later, to be able to reveal the truth regarding the names, numbers and whereabouts of all the disappearances pre, on and post October 29. It is only this process that can document the actual number of casualties, the death toll and their identities. The forensic process can leverage DNA and satellite technological advancements. Suspected sites of mass graves can be used to undertake the initial execution of the forensic investigation.

2.9 There is need to immediately free all 'presumed culprits' currently held after incarceration, abduction or enforced kidnaping prior, during and after 29 October 2025. This is a key pre-requisite towards ensuring a participatory recovery process and it will soothe the process of planning for the mediation talks, national healing and Constitutional reforms.

2.10 A constitutional reform process is urgently imperative. This process should be people centred, participatory and inclusive throughout to avoid a repeated capture by the political elites. Previously undertaken work such as the completed Constitutional Review Commission and Constituent Assembly drafts can be major inputs into production of a final KATIBA Draft to be validated by a citizen referendum. Fresh opinions can be entertained to update the drafts, given the decade long lapse that has occurred since the process stalled in 2014. A very serious Civil society and citizen-led Constitutional Awareness should precede the Constitutional reform process.

2.11 A total overhaul of the political and electoral system is direly required. At the moment, elections do not depict the will of the Tanzanian voters. Ill-intentioned and cosmetically implemented electoral reforms have distorted the actual *raison d'être* of why elections must exist. Like adding salt to injury, corruption, treating and bribery during intra-party preferential polls and

national elections have invalidated the value of the processes, in the first instance. In the summarised words of SADC, AU and Mbeki Foundation, Tanzania did not have an election in 2025. Unless there was implemented a major overhaul of the electoral system, Tanzania was prone to mayhem and murder of a larger scale akin to a genocide in the foreseeable future.

#### Additional Notes by Dr. Azaveli Lwaitama

2.12 In summary, I emphasized the importance of engaging closely with credible institutions and respected public figures to enable the Commonwealth team to effectively reach, meet, and listen to individuals across Tanzania – not only in Dar es Salaam and Dodoma. Such engagement is essential for gathering authentic and reliable testimony on the events of October 29, 2025, and the subsequent three to six days, particularly regarding the killing and injuring of unarmed youth by state security personnel.

Key institutions and individuals include the Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC), the Tanganyika Law Society (TLS), the Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC), Sheikh Issa Ponda, Bishop Benson Bagonza, Bishop Emmaus Mwamakula, and Bishop Joseph Gwajima.

Furthermore, if the Commonwealth Fact-Finding Team is to produce a report that resonates with and is trusted by the majority of Tanzanians, it must avoid any perception of being aligned with, or embedded within, government or ruling party structures.

2.13 To understand the root causes of the events of October 29, 2025, and the days that followed, it is necessary to examine structural governance issues – particularly the implications for citizens’ right to self-rule. This includes the absence of elected leadership at ward, division, district, and regional levels, alongside the widespread appointment of key administrative officials—such as Village/Neighbourhood, Ward and Divisional Executive Secretaries, and District Executive Directors – by the central government.

The concentration of appointive powers in the Office of the Union President appears comparable to, or even exceeding, that of the colonial Governor, who similarly appointed regional and district authorities, albeit with some degree of native authority autonomy.

2.14 I also underscored that resolving Tanzania’s current political impasse may require the involvement of an external, credible mediator – such as Dr. Naledi Pandor under the auspices of SADC—to facilitate a constructive and trusted dialogue process.

2.15 Finally, I highlighted the importance of drawing lessons from countries such as Malawi – and, to some extent, Kenya and Ghana – to demonstrate that a ruling or “liberation” party can peacefully relinquish state power through free and fair elections and still remain politically viable. This is critical in countering the entrenched belief that losing power equates to permanent exclusion, a perception that often serves to justify electoral manipulation.

**End**



## **Issued by**

1. Tanzania Transparency Forum (TRAFO), Administrative Host of TG-MSG
2. Jukwaa la Katiba Tanzania
3. Concern for Development Initiatives in Africa (ForDIA), Administrative Host of RAIA Ni SISI Movement
4. National Consortium of Civic Education in Tanzania (NACOCET)
5. Tanzania Fishers Union Organisation (FUO)
6. Pastoralists Indigenous Non-Governmental Organisations (PINGOs) Forum

## **For further clarification and additional information for editors**

This statement has been issued by the above civil society organisations and coordinated by TG-MSG, established in November 2025 to respond to human rights violations and election-related violence associated with the 29 October 2025 general elections.

TG-MSG is committed to mobilising stakeholders to restore sustainable peace, security, justice, and democratic governance in Tanzania.

For more information, contact TG-MSG at +255 639 365 465.