



**JOINT PRESS STATEMENT BY HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND MEDIA  
STAKEHOLDERS AGAINST THE SUSPENSION OF MWANANCHI AND  
MTANZANIA TABLOIDS**

THE Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC), a Coalition of more than 50 human rights organizations in collaboration with Media Owners Association of Tanzania (MOAT), Union of Tanzania Press Clubs (UTPC), Media Institute of Southern Africa (Tanzania Chapter) as well as the Media Council of Tanzania (MCT); have received with profound shock and grief over the government's stance to ban two other newspapers in the country MWANANCHI AND MTANZANIA.

MWANANCHI newspaper has been banned for fourteen (14) days while as MTANZANIA will be out of circulation for ninety days (90) respectively. The move sums the number of newspapers which have been banned to three. The government issued an indefinite ban to MWANAHALISI tabloid on July 2012.

Having thought through, we condemn the government's repeatedly dictatorship stance to issue threats and ban media outlets in the country. The 50 organizations jointly perceive such acts as a way for the government to threaten wananchi, to instill fear to the community to silence human rights activists; media houses as well human rights defenders in the country.

It is an undisputed fact that the move is a total violation of Article 18 of the Constitution of the Republic of Tanzania and Article 18 (1) (2) and the Zanzibar Constitution of 1984 through its 2010 issue.

Either the government has maintained its stance to use the (*Newspaper Act of 1976 Cap. 229, R.E. 2002*) and the *National Security Act of 1970, Cap.47 [R.E 2002]* to curtail the freedom of the media and the right to receive information in the country.

These laws have for years caused a public outcry as they are not only draconian by nature but rather contravene with the Constitution of the United Republic as well as international laws.

The two laws give the power to the Minister responsible for information to ban a newspaper or any media outlet at his own discretion. The law converts the minister to act as a chief editor, to prosecute, judge and execute the sentence. This is against the rule of natural justice.

This practice violates the rule of natural justice such as the right to be heard and the right to appeal before an independent organ with no vested interest. This is so because the government is the complainant and as such should have not been left to act as a prosecutor and a judge in this issue.

The subsequent ban of these tabloids violates the right to receive information as guaranteed by Article 19 of the *International Convention on Civil and Political Rights of 1966 (ICCPR)* as well as the *African Charter on Human and People's Rights of 1981*. Article 18 of the *Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania of 1977* guarantees the right to air their views without restrictions.

This act denies majority of Tanzanians the right to receive information and thus reduce accountability by government leaders. Either, this stance denies the right to employment to journalists of respective newspapers, staff, distributors as well as their families.

The coalition in collaboration with other stakeholders calls upon Tanzanians with good will to jointly press upon the following:

**Firstly**, the government to scrap away or amend all oppressive laws which curtail the freedom of the media and expression as it has been repeatedly recommended by various media stakeholders in the country.

**Secondly**, to lift its ban against all newspapers to enable Tanzanians enjoy their rights to information and employment.

**Thirdly**, the government should exhaust other remedies by using other organs such as the court and MCT to file its complaints against media outlets instead of issuing a ban.

**Fourthly**, the government should respect the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania due to the later being the Mother Law.

**Fifthly**, Media outlets should speak up by showing solidarity in this issue as one's agony lies on them all.

**Six**, Media outlets to continue seeking and imparting information of public interest.

**Seventh,** Civil societies and media institutions to increase its efforts in the constitution case filed by the Hali Halisi Publishers Ltd against the government calling upon it to scrap away the *Newspaper Act of 1976*.

**Eight,** Call upon the international community (UN), its agents, various envoys, all regional and international CSOs to take measures on this incident and others which haunt human rights activists and media personnel in the country.

**Nine,** We would like to make it clear that religious institutions, human rights activists, media personnel and civil societies have only one objective, to monitor the role played by the government. Thus closing one among them is a threat and contrary to the principles of human rights. We thus call upon all of them to press the government to immediately lift its ban against all tabloids it has closed down.

We call upon the public as first beneficiaries who receive information from the media to join hands with us and all stakeholders to denounce this ban.

This statement has been issued jointly and signed on September 30, 2013 by coalition members of the Tanzania Human Rights Defenders and other stakeholders listed hereunder.

#### ISSUED BY THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

1. Tanzania Citizens Information Bureau (TCIB)
2. Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC)
3. Media Institute of Southern Africa –MISA TAN
4. MIKONO YETU
5. HAKI MADINI
6. WOTE SAWA
7. Zanzibar Female Lawyers Association (ZAFELA )
8. YOUTH TO YOUTH
9. UNDER THE SAME SUN
10. Media Council of Tanzania (MCT)
11. Citizens' Parliament Watch (CPW)
12. Pastoralist Indigenous Non Governmental Forum(PINGOS)
13. MTWARA PARALEGAL
14. Musoma Social Development Organization (MUSODEO)-Mara
15. Tanzania Media Women Association (TAMWA)
16. Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP)
17. Hali Halisi Publishers Ltd
18. Medical Association of Doctors (MAT) 3
19. Tanzania Pastoralist Communities Forum (TPCF)
20. Tanzania Women Lawyers Association (TAWLA)
21. Southern Africa Human Rights NGO Network Tanzania Chapter ( SAHRiNGON)

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22. World Youth Alliance (WAY)
  23. WADADA CENTRE
  24. Haki Ardhi
  25. Union of Tanzania Press Clubs (UTPC)
  26. Zanzibar Legal Service Centre (ZLSC)
  27. Haki Elimu
  28. Stay Awake Network
  29. Human Rights Promotion Centre
  30. Tanzania Albino Society
  31. Kivulini
  32. National Human Rights Association for Education and World Peace
  33. Lindi Women Paralegal Centre
  34. TUFAE
  35. Kasulu Paralegal Centre
  36. Action Based Foundation
  37. LESHABINGO
  38. PAICODEO
  39. Journalists for Human Rights
  40. Policy Forum
  41. Pastoralist Women Council (PWC)
  42. SIKIKA
  43. Chunya Legal and Counseling Unit (CHULECU)
  44. Media Owners Association of Tanzania-(MOAT)
  45. Tanzania Constitution Forum
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