



STATEMENT CONDEMNING THE ARREST OF ADVOCATE YONAS MASIAYA AND THE DENIAL OF BAIL AT ARUSHA CENTRAL POLICE STATION

The Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC) condemns the act of the Police Force arresting and denying bail to Advocate Yonas Masiaya since yesterday, April 30, 2024. Advocate Masiaya was arrested yesterday evening on allegations of circulating a picture of the Arusha Regional Commissioner in WhatsApp groups. After his arrest, Advocate Masiaya was deprived of his phone and taken to the Central Police Station in Arusha.

Despite theailable nature of the allegations against Advocate Masiaya, the Police denied him bail, claiming they were awaiting instructions from higher authorities. Today, May 1, 2024, Advocate Ngeeyan Oloibormunyei Laizer and Advocate Masiaya's family went to the Central Police Station in Arusha to follow up on his bail, but the Police have not granted him bail, stating that they are awaiting instructions from higher authorities.

The Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC) has directed its lawyers in Arusha to closely monitor the situation and prepare documents to file a case against the Police Force for detaining Advocate Masiaya without bail for allegations that he could have self-bailed. Additionally, THRDC believes that the Regional Commissioner is a public servant, and therefore, the dissemination of his picture in WhatsApp groups is a common occurrence.

OUR CALL:

- The Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC) calls upon the Police Force to release Advocate Masiaya on bail.
- The Coalition urges the Police Force to conduct investigations in accordance with the Law and the Police General Orders (PGO). The Police should not operate by waiting for instructions from above, which are outside the legal framework.
- If there are indeed allegations against Advocate Masiaya, the Police should have conducted investigations before arresting him.
- We continue to demand amendments to the cybercrime law as it has become a tool misused to arrest and suppress the freedom of Tanzanians to use online platforms to criticize, question, and advocate for human rights. This law poses many challenges, including granting the Police the authority to seize the communication devices of suspects and infringing on their privacy contrary to data protection and privacy laws.

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