



Free and fair elections are at stake in Tanzania

The Democrat Union of Africa DUA is very concerned about the latest news coming out of Tanzania. With a little more than two months to the general election, Tanzania is entering into a crucial phase of political competition, where the country's democratic credentials are put to the test. In this context, the treatment of DUA member CHADEMA's presidential candidate, Mr. Tundu Lissu, creates serious doubt that the Government of Tanzania, led by President Magufuli, will guarantee a free and fair election.

Tundu Lissu has been chosen as the flag-bearer of CHADEMA for the presidential election. His return to Tanzania after years in exile - following an assassination attempt in 2017 - has been celebrated by hundreds of thousands of Tanzanians. Mr. Lissu is the main contender for President Magufuli in the elections slated for 28th October 2020.

Since his nomination, Mr. Lissu has not experienced the protection of his constitutional rights as presidential candidate and there have been attacks on his safety. Assaults on two CHADEMA offices and stone throwing attacks on CHADEMA supporters are only the obvious signs of the government's intention not to guarantee unbiased political participation.

Another attempt by the Tanzanian Government to obstruct political engagement has emerged in the last few days when Mr. Lissu was summoned to appear before the Resident Magistrates Court of Dar es Salaam on August 26th. This is the very same day he has to be at the National Election Commission in Dodoma. Actions such as this, which make it impossible for Mr. Lissu to satisfy all sides and appear in both places, can only be seen as direct political interference in judicial and electoral processes with the intent to deny Mr. Lissu his right to stand in the October elections.

Any attempt to politicize and instrumentalize legal proceedings in order to undermine constitutionally protected processes of political competition would violate the core principles of the rule of law. Using the legal proceedings around the current charges – before any conviction - as an instrument to undermine his ability to run for public office is a violation of Mr. Lissu's fundamental rights as a Tanzanian citizen.

In addition, some Chadema parliamentary candidates are being refused nomination forms by local returning officers and others were arrested by police when picking up nomination forms. All of this threatens the peace and security of Tanzania during this critical election period, let alone undermining the credentials of a free, fair, inclusive and peaceful election.

DUA stands with Tundu Lissu, our partners from CHADEMA, and the people of Tanzania in their demand for and in their expectation of a free and fair presidential election. Examples all around the world, such as the people's protests in Belarus or in Hong Kong, illustrate that authoritarian behavior by a ruling elite, denying political participation, will be no longer tolerated. Therefore, sabotaging Mr. Lissu's candidature and preventing him from being on the ballot would undermine the overall value of the upcoming elections.

DUA asks all its members to closely observe the political developments in Tanzania in the months to come, and to support Tundu Lissu and CHADEMA in their fight for an open and free Tanzania, where democratic principles and the rule of law will be guaranteed.

The Democrat Union of Africa is the leading association of conservative, Christian-democratic, and centre-right political parties on the African continent and the regional organization of the International Democrat Union.