

## EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

### Public Statement

EHAHRD-Net Index: TZ 010/007/2008 (Public)

04<sup>th</sup> March 2008

### **KAMPALA: EHAHRD-Net CONDEMNS ARREST OF EDITORS IN TANZANIA**

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (EHAHRD-Net) condemns the arrest of two online editors in Tanzania. Maxello Mello and Mike Mushi were reportedly detained and questioned for a full day in Dar es Salaam on the 18<sup>th</sup> of February 2008.

According to Network sources in Tanzania, the two editors host a popular discussion website called *Jumbo Forums*. The two editors' lawyer Tundu Lissu is quoted to have said that the police had no official charges against them and that the order had come from the President. During a Press Conference held on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2008, the Inspector General of Police Sam Mwema stated that the editors were arrested on suspicion of criminal activity. The police is also said to have confiscated their equipment including computers, shutting down their website for five days.

The editors stated that their discussion forum had played a major role in exposing a questionable energy contract involving the former Prime Minister Edward Lowassa and an American energy firm. The Prime minister resigned on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2008 after a parliamentary probe into the incident.

This is the second incident in Tanzania this year where journalists have been attacked in relation to their work. In early January 2008 two editors of Mwanahalis, a privately owned newspaper, were attacked at their offices in the Dar es Salaam suburb of Kinondoni, and seriously injured with acid and machetes by unknown assailants. (See; EHAHRDN Index: TZ 002/007/2008).

“With Tanzania long being hailed for its respect for human rights, the Network expresses concern regarding the current trend of events and calls for a stop to all harassment of journalists. Freedom of expression is not a prerogative of the Tanzanian authorities and is provided for not only by Tanzania's Constitution but also by other regional and international human rights instruments. The Tanzanian police and government authorities must desist from any future infringement on media freedom but rather guard the freedom of expression as a fundamental human right” says Hassan Shire Sheikh, Chairperson EHAHRDP/Net.

### **APPEAL**

EHAHRD-Net appeals to the Tanzanian government authorities to properly investigate the detention of the editors and ensure that justice prevails in their case.

We once again appeal to the government to jealously guard the reputation it has held over the years by maintaining absolute respect for media institutions.

EHAHRD-Net also calls upon the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the international community to work within their respective mandates and ensure that the situation of the media in Tanzania does not escalate.

The Network further calls upon all its members across the sub-region to write to the Tanzanian authorities calling on them to desist from any future attacks on the media.

**Send appeals to:**

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Prime Minister's Office  
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Tel: +255 22 2117249-56  
P. O. Box 3021  
DAR ES SALAAM  
TANZANIA
2. The Vice President  
Vice President's Office  
Fax: +255 22 2116990  
Tel: +255 22 2116919  
P. O. Box 5380  
DAR ES SALAAM  
TANZANIA
3. The Minister,  
Ministry of Home Affairs  
Fax: +255 22 2120486  
Tel: +255 22 2119050  
P. O. Box 9223  
DAR ES SALAAM  
TANZANIA
4. The Minister of Justice  
Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs  
Fax: +255 22 2113236  
Tel: +255 22 2118178  
P. O. Box 9050  
DAR ES SALAAM  
TANZANIA

5. The Inspector General of Police (IGP),  
Ministry of Public Safety and Security,  
Fax: +255 22 213655/ 2134462  
Tel: +255 22 2113461  
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6. The Chairman,  
Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance (CHRGG),  
Fax: +255 22 21352 26  
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