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**STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA
FOR THE 53RD SESSION OF THE
UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW**

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Introduction

1. The European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ) is a non-governmental organization dedicated to promoting and protecting human rights around the world. The ECLJ also holds Special Consultative status before the United Nations Economic and Social Council. This report discusses the status of human rights in the United Republic of Tanzania (Tanzania) for the 53rd session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

Background

2. Tanzania is a country located in East Africa and has a population of approximately 70.5 million people.¹ The majority of the population is Christian, with approximately 61.4% of the population identifying as Christian, 35.2% as Muslim, 1.8% belonging to folk religions, and 1.6% as unaffiliated.²

3. Tanzania's last review was held on November 5, 2021.³ As a result of the review, Tanzania received 252 recommendations, 167 of which it accepted.⁴ It was recommended by Bulgaria, and supported by Tanzania, that the government "[t]ake further steps to effectively address discrimination and violence against persons, including children, with albinism."⁵ Additionally, it was recommended by Finland, and supported by Tanzania, that the government "[a]dopt legislative and policy measures to combat all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, including by addressing the issue of child marriage and ensuring access to education for pregnant schoolgirls and young mothers."⁶ In our last report on Tanzania, we also expressed concern about the violence being perpetrated against children with albinism. Unfortunately, the government continues to fail to protect people with albinism from being attacked. No recommendations were made regarding religious freedom.

¹ Adolfo C. Mascarenhas et al., *Tanzania*, BRITANNICA (Apr. 1, 2026), <https://www.britannica.com/place/Tanzania>.

² *Id.*

³ *Universal Periodic Review – United Republic of Tanzania*, OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/tz-index> (last visited Apr. 7, 2026).

⁴ *Infographic - Tanzania*, OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/upr/2022-06-28/Infographic-tanzania.pdf> (last visited Apr. 7, 2026).

⁵ *UPR of United Republic of Tanzania (3rd Cycle - 39th Session) Thematic List of Recommendations*, OHCHR 5, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/lib-docs/hrbodies/upr/documents/session39/tz/2022-06-29/UPR39_Tanzania_Thematic_List_of_Recommendations.docx (last visited Apr. 7, 2026).

⁶ *Id.* at 4.

Legal Framework

Exploitation of People with Albinism

4. Under Article 12 of the Constitution of Tanzania, “[a]ll human beings are born free, and are all equal. Every person is entitled to recognition and respect for his dignity.”⁷ Further, under Article 14, “[e]very person has the right to live and to the protection of his life by the society in accordance with the law.”⁸

5. Under Article 3 of the Witchcraft Act:

A person who-

(a) by his statements or actions represents himself to have the power of witchcraft;

(b) makes, uses, has in his possession or represents himself to possess any instruments of witchcraft;

(c) supplies to any other person any as to the instrument of witchcraft;

(d) advises any other person upon the use of witchcraft or any instrument of witchcraft; or

(e) threatens to use or resorts to the use of witchcraft or any instrument of witchcraft upon or against any person or property, commits an offence under this Act.⁹

6. Under Article 5 of this Act:

A person who commits an offence under this Act with intent to cause death, disease, injury, or misfortune to any community, class of persons, person, or animal, or to cause injury to any property on conviction shall be liable to imprisonment of not less than seven years.¹⁰

7. Tanzania is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).¹¹ Under Article 6 of the ICCPR, “[e]very human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life.”¹² Additionally, under

⁷ THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA art 12, <https://rsf.org/sites/default/files/constitution.pdf>.

⁸ *Id.* art. 14.

⁹ THE WITCHCRAFT ACT art. 3, <https://www.nps.go.tz/uploads/documents/sw-1751542930-THE%20WITCHCRAFT%20ACT.pdf>.

¹⁰ *Id.* art. 5.

¹¹ *Ratification Status for United Republic of Tanzania*, OHCHR, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=186&Lang=EN (last visited Apr. 7, 2026)..

¹² International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights art. 6, *adopted* Dec. 16, 1966, 999 U.N.T.S. 171, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>.

Article 7 of the ICCPR, “[n]o one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”¹³

8. Furthermore, Tanzania has a responsibility to uphold the rights enshrined in the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights.¹⁴ Under Article 4 of the Charter, “[h]uman beings are inviolable. Every human being shall be entitled to respect for his life and the integrity of his person. No one may be arbitrarily deprived of this right.”¹⁵

Child Marriage

9. Under Article 13 of the Law of Marriage Act:

(1) A person shall not marry who, being male, has not attained the apparent age of eighteen years or, being female, has not attained the apparent age of fifteen years.

(2) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (1), the court shall, in its discretion, have power, on application, to give leave for a marriage where the parties are, or either of them is, below the ages prescribed in subsection (1) where-

(a) each party has attained the age of fourteen years; and

(b) the court is satisfied that, there are special circumstances which make the proposed marriage desirable.

(3) A person who has not attained the apparent age of eighteen years or fifteen years as the case may be, and in respect of whom the leave of the court has not been obtained under subsection (2), shall be said to be below the minimum age for marriage.¹⁶

10. Tanzania is a party to both the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).¹⁷ Article 1 of the CRC defines a child as “every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier[.]”¹⁸ and Article 16 of the CEDAW prohibits child marriages.¹⁹

¹³ *Id.* art. 7.

¹⁴ *List of Countries Which Have Signed, Ratified/Acceded to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights*, AFR. UNION (June 15, 2017), https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36390-sl-african_charter_on_human_and_peoples_rights_2.pdf.

¹⁵ African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights art. 4, *adopted* June 1981, https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36390-treaty-0011_-african_charter_on_human_and_peoples_rights_e.pdf.

¹⁶ LAW OF MARRIAGE ACT art. 13, <https://oagmis.oag.go.tz/portal/acts/revised/134/download>; *see also* LAW OF MARRIAGE ACT art. 13, <https://tanzlii.org/en/akn/tz/act/1971/5/eng@2023-12-31>.

¹⁷ *Ratification Status for United Republic of Tanzania*, *supra* note 11.

¹⁸ Convention on the Rights of the Child art.1, *adopted* Nov. 20, 1989, 1577 U.N.T.S. 3, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>.

¹⁹ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women art. 16 § 2, *adopted* Dec. 18, 1979, 1249 U.N.T.S. 13, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women>.

Exploitation of People with Albinism

11. In Tanzania, as many as one in 1,400 people have albinism, which equates to approximately 50,300 individuals.²⁰ Since Tanzania’s last review, the government has failed to protect these people from being attacked.²¹ These attacks have included individuals being abducted, mutilated, and killed.²² It has also been reported that the graves of people with albinism have been exhumed and their body parts sold off.²³ The mistreatment of people with Albinism in Tanzania stems from traditional beliefs that the body parts of people with albinism can bring forth wealth and success.²⁴ A complete set of organs from a person with albinism is valued \$75,000.²⁵

12. Since 2007, there have been more than 209 reported attacks on individuals with albinism in Tanzania.²⁶ The most recent of which occurred on May 30, 2024, when it was reported that Asimwe Novati, a two-year-old child with albinism, was abducted and killed.²⁷ On June 17, 2024, Asimwe’s body was found mutilated, with her limbs, eyes, and tongue cut off.²⁸ This attack came shortly after a ten-year-old child with albinism was mutilated by people using machetes.²⁹ However, most attacks occur in rural regions of the country, and reports of attacks go unreported because there is the belief that people with albinism simply “disappear” instead of die.³⁰

13. Unfortunately, despite claiming to support the recommendation to “[s]trengthen the legislative framework to combat violence against persons with albinism,”³¹ Tanzania has not taken the steps needed to protect people with albinism from being attacked and exploited. In February 2025, the African Court on Human and People’s Rights issued a ruling against Tanzania, noting the violations of human rights against people with albinism.³² The court found that Tanzania had violated the rights of people with albinism that are guaranteed under the African Charter of Human

²⁰ *People with Albinism in Tanzania*, MINORITY RTS. GRP., <https://minorityrights.org/communities/people-with-albinism/> (last updated Dec. 2020).

²¹ Charlotte Baker, *Attacks on People with Albinism in Tanzania: African Court Holds Government Responsible – Why it Matters*, THE CONVERSATION (Mar. 12, 2025, 10:16 AM), <https://theconversation.com/attacks-on-people-with-albinism-in-tanzania-african-court-holds-government-responsible-why-it-matters-251275>.

²² *Id.*

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ Mohamed Daghar, *Tanzanians Hard Hit by Trafficking in People with Albinism*, INST. FOR SEC. STUDS. (Apr. 19, 2022).

²⁶ Baker, *supra* note 21..

²⁷ LEGAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS CENTRE 11 (June 2024), https://humanrights.or.tz/storage/user_storage/66952473c08b6.pdf.

²⁸ *Id.* at 12.

²⁹ *Id.* at 11.

³⁰ Daghar, *supra* note 25.

³¹ *UPR of United Republic of Tanzania (3rd Cycle - 39th Session) Thematic List of Recommendations*, *supra* note 5, at 4.

³² Zelidya Ladislaus, *Tanzania Told to Amend Witchcraft Laws in Dealing with Attacks on People with Albinism*, THE TANZ. TIMES, <https://tanzaniatimes.net/tanzania-to-amend-witchcraft-laws-in-addressing-attacks-on-people-with-albinism/> (last updated Feb. 5, 2025).

and People’s Rights, and failed to investigate cases of violence and hold the perpetrators accountable.³³

14. The United Nations has also recognized Tanzania’s continued failure to investigate violence against people with albinism and protect them from harm.³⁴ In 2024, Amalia Gamio Ríos, a Committee member for the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities stated that “[w]e call on the State party to urgently and unambiguously condemn any attacks against people with albinism and to investigate any such attacks promptly and effectively[.]” and that “[f]ailure to do so sends a message that ritual killings and mutilations are condoned, which amounts to serious violations of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities[.]”³⁵ This statement was made after the committee investigated three cases of violence against people with albinism between 2017 and 2019 and found that authorities failed to take necessary measures to protect people with albinism.³⁶ Additionally, Tanzania refused to meet with the committee in 2023 and 2024 to provide information on what authorities are doing to protect people with albinism.³⁷

15. While the government has created shelters for people with albinism, these shelters are severely lacking, and individuals are subjected to abuse.³⁸ In Tanzania, there are approximately thirty-two shelters across the country providing shelter and support for people with albinism.³⁹ It is estimated that approximately 200 people are living in these shelters.⁴⁰ Unfortunately, UNICEF has reported that there have been cases of physical, psychological, and sexual abuse in these shelters.⁴¹ Further, these shelters are near capacity and unable to accommodate additional individuals.⁴²

16. As stated above, there are as many as 50,300 people with albinism, yet the government is only providing shelter for approximately 200 people. Thankfully, many NGOs have stepped up where the government is lacking to provide shelter and resources for people with albinism. One organization doing this called ZeruZeru, which provides a safe home all year for up to 100 children with albinism.⁴³ Additionally, they provide these children with education and healthcare.⁴⁴ Under the Same Sun is another such organization that provides students with albinism protection and

³³ *Centre for Human Rights Welcomes Landmark Judgment on Rights of Persons with Albinism in Tanzania Delivered by African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights*, CTR. FOR HUM. RTS. (Feb. 5, 2025), <https://www.chr.up.ac.za/press-statements/3941-statement-the-centre-for-human-rights-welcomes-the-landmark-judgment-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-albinism-in-tanzania-delivered-by-the-african-court-on-human-and-peoples-rights>.

³⁴ *Tanzania’s Lack of Investigation and Action Equivalent to Condoning Ritual Killings and Mutilations of People with Albinism*, UN Committee Says, OHCHR (Apr. 24, 2024), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/04/tanzanias-lack-investigation-and-action-equivalent-condoning-ritual-killings>.

³⁵ *Id.*

³⁶ *Id.*

³⁷ *Id.*

³⁸ Lidija Misic, *How the Albino Myth is Endangering Tanzanian Children*, HUMANIUM (Aug. 6, 2024).

³⁹ *Id.*

⁴⁰ *Id.*

⁴¹ *Id.*

⁴² *Id.*

⁴³ *What We Do*, ZERUZERU SIMAMSA SASA!, (last visited Apr. 7, 2026).

⁴⁴ *Id.*

support.⁴⁵ Since 2008, Under the Same Sun has helped students with albinism access safe, high-quality education and also advocates on their behalf.⁴⁶ Further, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies works in Tanzania to provide people with albinism with health education, psycho-social support, and works to support people with albinism who are in distress and are hiding.⁴⁷

Child Marriages

17. In Tanzania, approximately 31% of girls are married before they turn eighteen, and 5% are married before they turn fifteen.⁴⁸ In some regions, like Shinyanga, the child marriage rate is as high as 59%.⁴⁹ This equates to approximately 6,400,000 girls being subjected to child marriage, making Tanzania one of the worst offenders for child marriage in Eastern and Southern Africa.⁵⁰

18. There are a few cultural factors that contribute to Tanzania's high rates of child marriage. One of these factors is poverty.⁵¹ In Tanzania, marriage is viewed as a way to protect girls from poverty while being able to provide for their families through a bride price, known as Mahari.⁵² This practice involves the husband giving money, cattle, or clothing to the girl's family in exchange for the girl's hand in marriage.⁵³ Because of the Mahari, many families see this as a way to get much needed supplies to provide for the family.

19. Another practice, that is much more harmful to girls, is the practice of Nyumba ntobu.⁵⁴ This is practiced primarily in remote areas of the Mara region,⁵⁵ and involves an older, wealthier woman who pays a bride price for a younger girl.⁵⁶ In return, the younger girl promises to relinquish any parental rights she has through relations with men outside of their arranged

⁴⁵ *How We Help*, UNDER THE SAME SUN, <https://www.underthesamesun.com/>.

⁴⁶ *Id.*

⁴⁷ *Through Albino Eyes the Plight of Albino People in Africa's Great Lakes Region and a Red Cross Response*, INT'L FED'N OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES, <https://www.cosv.org/download/centrodocumentazione/Albinos-Report-EN.pdf>.

⁴⁸ *Towards a Co-Created Civil Society Strategy to End Child Marriage in Tanzania: Tanzania End Child Marriage Network (TECMN) Co-Creation Workshop*, GIRLS NOT BRIDES (June 24, 2024), <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/articles/towards-a-co-created-civil-society-strategy-to-end-child-marriage-in-tanzania-tanzania-end-child-marriage-network-tecmn-co-creation-workshop/>.

⁴⁹ *Id.*

⁵⁰ *Eastern and Southern Africa*, GIRLS NOT BRIDES, <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/regions-and-countries/eastern-and-southern-africa/> (last updated Apr. 24, 2025).

⁵¹ *Tanzania*, GIRLS NOT BRIDES, <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/regions-and-countries/tanzania/> (last visited Apr. 7, 2026).

⁵² *Id.*

⁵³ *Id.*

⁵⁴ *Id.*

⁵⁵ Stefano Stranges, *Nyumba Nthobu – The Vanishing Tradition of Women-to-Women Marriages in Rural Tanzania*, HEAD ON FOUND., <https://headon.org.au/exhibitions/nyumba-nthobu-the-vanishing-tradition-of-women-to-women-marriages-in-rural-tanzania>.

⁵⁶ *Tanzania*, *supra* note 51.

marriage.⁵⁷ Another harmful practice is the practice of kupura in the Shinyanga province.⁵⁸ This practice involves the abduction, rape, and marriage of young girls against their will.⁵⁹

20. Further contributing to the high rates of child marriage is the fact that the law currently does not prohibit it. This is despite the fact that in 2016, the High Court ordered that the law be changed to make eighteen the minimum age for marriage regardless of gender.⁶⁰ Unfortunately, the government has yet to enact this change in its laws.⁶¹

Recommendations

21. Tanzania has an obligation under numerous international agreements to guarantee and protect the right to life. These rights extend to everyone, regardless of their skin color or medical condition. Once again, we urge Tanzania to take strong measures to protect people with albinism and punish those who harm them. Further, because many of these attacks stem from traditional beliefs, it is imperative that the government educate the population on the dangers of these beliefs and work to dispel the myths surrounding people with albinism. Additionally, we ask that Tanzania allocate more funding for shelters and education and to support the NGOs who are already working in the country providing shelter and support for people with albinism.

22. We also ask that Tanzania amend its marriage laws and set the minimum age for marriage to eighteen, regardless of gender. Further, because cultural practices play a large role in child marriage, we ask that the government conduct awareness and education campaigns to educate the population on the dangers of child marriage and work to ensure that these practices are stopped.

⁵⁷ Stranges, *supra* note 55.

⁵⁸ Tanzania, *supra* note 51.

⁵⁹ *Id.*

⁶⁰ Sheryl L. Buske, *Child Marriage in Tanzania: Loopholes, Duct Tape, and Lesser Evils*, 60 TULSA L. REV. 109 (2025), <https://digitalcommons.law.utulsa.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3342&context=tlr>.

⁶¹ *Id.*