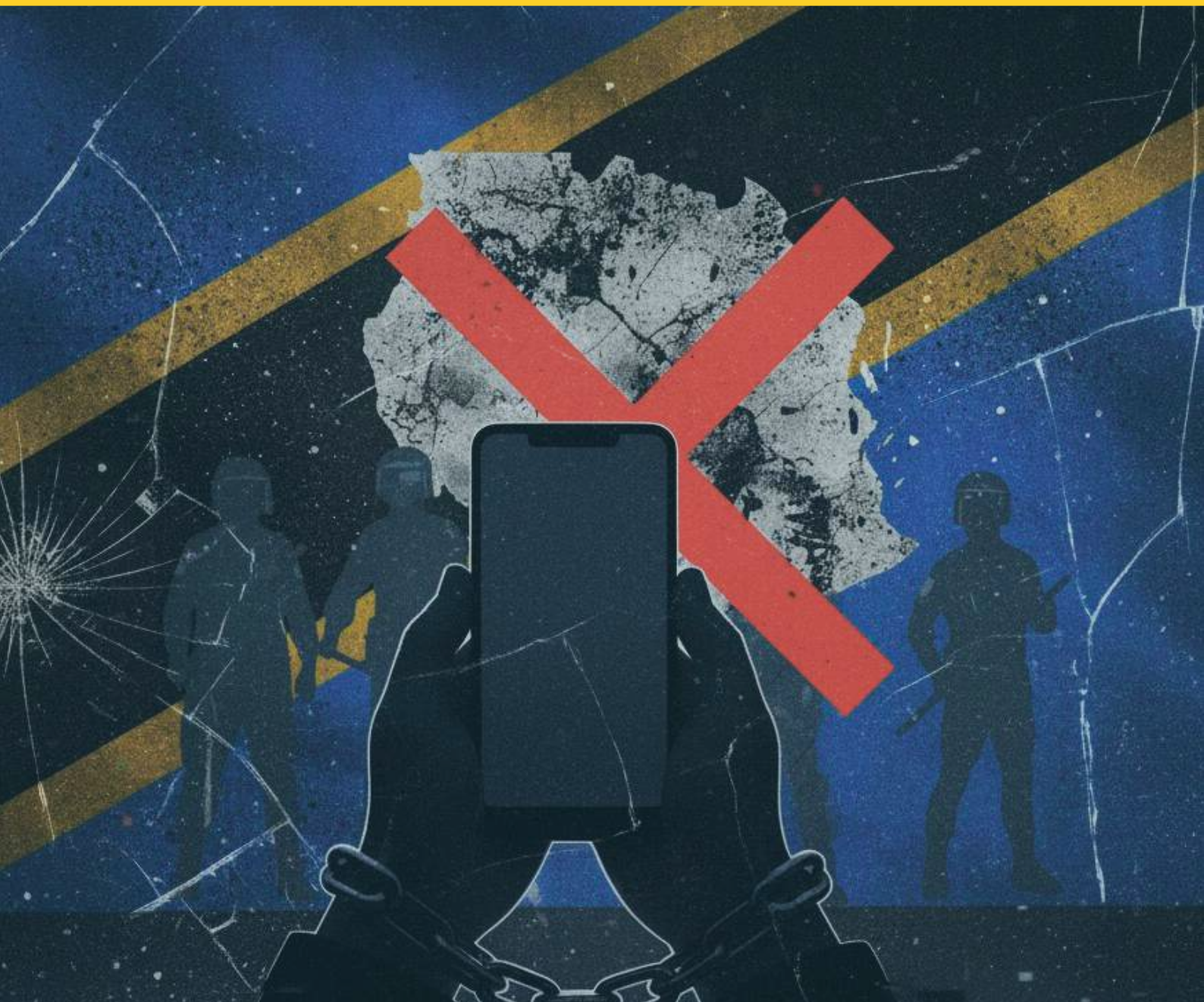


ADVOCACY BRIEF

Tanzania State of Internet Governance Series

THE DIGITAL BLACKOUT: State Control, Violence, and the Silencing of Tanzania's 2025 General Election

ISSUE 06: NOV 2025



PRODUCED BY:

Tech & Media Convergency (TMC)

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About the Tanzania State of Internet Governance Series

The Tanzania State of Internet Governance Series is a comprehensive monthly initiative that examines the current landscape of Internet governance in Tanzania. It highlights key issues, challenges, and opportunities in digital governance, policy frameworks, cybersecurity, and digital rights. Through expert insights and data-driven analysis, the series aims to inform stakeholders, policymakers, and the public about critical trends shaping the country's digital future and digital economy. It promotes transparency, accountability, and inclusive decision-making in Internet governance. The series is part of the Tanzania Digital Collaboration Program, supported by the U.S. Embassy in Dar es Salaam, in collaboration with the Bureau of African Affairs at the U.S. Department of State.

About the Internet Governance Tanzania Working Group (IGTWG)

The Internet Governance Tanzania Working Group (IGTWG), led by civil society and coordinated by Tech & Media Convergence (TMC), comprises 25 organizations from Tanzania Mainland and Zanzibar. It promotes data governance, inclusivity, equitable internet access, and responsible usage while advocating for policy reforms to shape Tanzania's digital landscape.

About the Tanzania Technical Group

The Tanzania Technical Group draws from independent Tanzanian ICT experts, lawyers, policymakers, researchers, Social Media Activists, Communication Specialists, civil society organizations, and digital governance specialists to foster innovation, ensure sustainable development, and provide knowledge for informed policy briefs.

Introduction

This policy brief provides a seven-pillar, evidence-based analysis of the nationwide internet shutdown imposed by the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania from October 29 to November 3, 2025. The findings reveal that the “digital blackout” was not an emergency security response, but a premeditated instrument of state control. Evidence indicates that the shutdown coincided with and concealed widespread violations of fundamental human rights, including the right to life as protected under Article 14 of the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania, Article 4 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, and Article 6(1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

The analysis identifies three core findings: First, the shutdown created a “cover of darkness” that enabled security forces to use lethal force against protesters and civilians. While the UN Human Rights Office verified at least ten deaths, multiple reports from opposition parties, civil society, and medical personnel suggest that hundreds were killed or remain unaccounted for. The blackout obstructed documentation, resulting in an “atrocities information gap” that continues to frustrate accountability and truth-telling.

Second, the shutdown produced an information vacuum that allowed state-controlled narratives to dominate. With independent media silenced and digital communications severed, misinformation spread unchecked. Citizens were unable to verify events, coordinate safety, or communicate with the outside world conditions that facilitated the state’s subsequent claim of a 98% electoral victory amid widespread allegations of intimidation and violence.

Third, the economic cost was catastrophic. According to NetBlocks (2025), the six-day, seven-hour shutdown cost Tanzania USD 86.7 million, equivalent to TZS 204,058,316,031 based on 2023 exchange rates or TZS 213.2 billion at November 2025 rates. This economic self-sabotage halted digital transactions, disrupted mobile money services, obstructed logistics, and choked small business operations. The resulting loss undermined Tanzania’s reputation as one of Africa’s emerging digital economies, eroded investor confidence, and worsened household vulnerability, particularly among informal workers dependent on mobile connectivity for income and remittances.

The report further documents the complicity of Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) who allegedly deactivated customer support channels during the shutdown and the failure of regional bodies, notably the African Union, whose congratulatory statement to the incumbent contradicted findings from SADC, AU Observatory Mission Preliminary findings and domestic observers that the election “fell short of democratic standards.”

In conclusion, this brief underscores the urgency of restoring justice, accountability, and transparency in the aftermath of the 2025 internet shutdown and election-related violence. It calls upon the Government of Tanzania to uphold truth and the rule of law by ensuring accountability for human rights violations, repealing repressive digital and electoral legislation, and guaranteeing non-recurrence through institutional reforms. Regional and continental bodies including the ACHPR, SADC, and AU, are urged to establish an independent fact-finding mission to investigate the full extent of the violations and economic losses. Finally, it appeals to the international community to heed the U.S. Senate’s policy review call, adopt targeted sanctions against those responsible, and support civil society coalitions in archiving digital evidence and pursuing justice against both corporate and state perpetrators.

Part 1: The 'Digital Battlefield' and the Pre-Election Crackdown

It was the planned, logical culmination of a months-long campaign

The internet shutdown that commenced on October 29, 2025, was not an isolated event. It was the planned, logical culmination of a months-long campaign of escalating state repression designed to systematically dismantle all avenues of dissent and ensure a non-competitive election.^[1]

1.1 Systematic Elimination of Political Opposition

The 2025 General Election was rendered uncompetitive by design. The state apparatus was mobilized to eliminate all viable challengers to President Samia Suluhu Hassan and the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party. The leader of the main opposition party (Chadema), Tundu Lissu, have been remanded in prison for months prior on treason charges after he called for electoral reforms.

The candidate for the second-largest opposition party (ACT-Wazalendo), Luhaga Mpina, was barred from the presidential race despite filing case to High Court and appeal to CAT.^[2] This political cleansing left President Hassan to face 16 candidates from "smaller parties who hardly campaigned", creating a political vacuum that guaranteed a pre-determined outcome.



Figure 1: The Kenyan Bold Newspaper "The Standard" issue 29th October 2025 showing how the Political environment in Tanzania was marred with removing oppositions.

1.2 The Regulatory and Physical "Wave of Terror"

Simultaneously, the state fostered a "climate of fear" through legal and extra-legal intimidation. Human rights organizations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, documented a clear pattern of abductions, enforced disappearances, and arbitrary arrests of government critics, activists, and journalists in the months preceding the vote.^[3] The state's regulatory bodies were weaponized.

On September 6, 2025, the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA) suspended the license of JamiiForums, a popular and critical online discussion platform, for 90 days, alleging its content "disrespected" the government and the president.^[4]

As Tech & Media Convergence (TMC) noted at the time, this was part of a "systematic and intensifying campaign" of "online censorship, surveillance, and regulatory pressure" intended to "threaten the integrity of the electoral process".^[5]

1.3 Controlling the 'Digital Battlefield'

The pre-election "digital battlefield" in Tanzania was of its own kind never seen in Tanzania.^[6] The state, aware of its waning popular support, attempted a two-pronged information strategy.

1.State-Sponsored Narratives. The CCM party deployed a digital strategy using high-profile celebrities and influencers, to flood social media with pro-government contents.^[7]

2.Organic Dissent and State Panic. This polished campaign was overwhelmed by widespread, often anonymous, dissent on platforms like TikTok, which surged in popularity among Tanzania's youth.^[8] A critical case study is the arrest of influencer-businesswoman Jenifer 'Niffer' Bilikwiza Jovin on October 27. Her alleged crime was participating in a popular TikTok challenge that used a soundbite from one of President Hassan's campaign rallies.^[9]

^[1] See: [ACHPR Press release on the Nationwide Internet Outage on Election Day in the United Republic of Tanzania](#), accessed November 4, 2025; [Press release on the Nationwide Internet Outage on Election Day in the United Republic of Tanzania](#) | African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, accessed November 6, 2025.

^[2] The Chanzo (2025). [Luhaga Mpina: Tanzania's Opposition Dreams Dies in Court](#); Democracy Union of Africa (2025) Statement Regarding escalating Repression and Opposition Clampdown in Tanzania issued 23th October 2025.

^[3] See: Amnesty International Report (2025). [Unopposed, Unchecked, Unjust.](#); Amnesty International (2025). [Tanzania: Authorities instil climate of fear and step up repression ahead of general elections](#).

^[4] TMC (2025). [ADVOCACY BRIEF: Censorship, Surveillance, and Digital Freedoms: Navigating Tanzania's Online Space Ahead of the 2025 General Election](#).

^[5] Ibid.

^[6] Ibid.

^[7] See: Aljazeera (2025). [Tanzania's digital battlefield heats up ahead of election](#).

^[8] Ibid.

^[9] The Chanzo (2025). [Dar es Salaam Police Arrest Influencer-Businesswoman Amid Rising Election Tensions](#).



Figure 2: Advocacy Brief: Censorship, Surveillance and Digital Freedoms in Tanzania, examines navigating electoral risks before 2025.

On 7th November 2024 Niffer with 21 others was charged in Resident Magistrate Court of Dar es Salaam at Kisutu with three offences which are Conspiracy to commit an offence contrary to section 384 and Treason contrary to section 39(2)(d) both offences of the same Penal Code [Cap 16 R:E 2023].^[10]

The state's pre-election strategy was a sophisticated attempt to control the narrative through both positive reinforcement (influencers) and targeted suppression (legal threats, arrests).^[11] The viral dissent on TikTok and the growing online calls for protest (such as #MO29) proved this strategy had failed.^[12] The state was losing the information war. The nationwide shutdown on October 29 was, therefore, not the first option, but the final solution an admission of their inability to control the narrative, leaving elimination of the narrative as the only remaining option.

Part 2: Anatomy of a Nationwide Shutdown (Oct 29 – Nov 3)

2.1 Chronology of the Blackout October 28 (Day before Election)

Major social media platforms like Signal, YouTube were restricted and inaccessible without VPNs from approximately 20:00 hours. The majority of people thought that be as in 2020, restricting the internet leaves VPNs functioning. These media platforms' shutdown was lifted up next day, 29th, from early morning until 11:00 Hrs

October 29 (Election Day)

As polling stations opened, the internet observatory NetBlocks confirmed a "nationwide disruption to internet connectivity".^[13] This "digital blackout"^[14] was immediate and comprehensive, plunging the country into "digital isolation".^[15]

Total Digital Blackout happened from 11:00Hrs until the next five days after the General election

October 30 – November 2

The shutdown was maintained for five consecutive days. This period correlated precisely with the escalation of nationwide protests, the violent state crackdown, and the opaque counting of ballots. NetBlocks data confirmed connectivity remained disrupted throughout this period.

November 3 Evening (Post-Inauguration)

Following the swearing-in of President Samia Suluhu Hassan, partial restoration of internet services was reported at around 17:07 Hours.^[16]

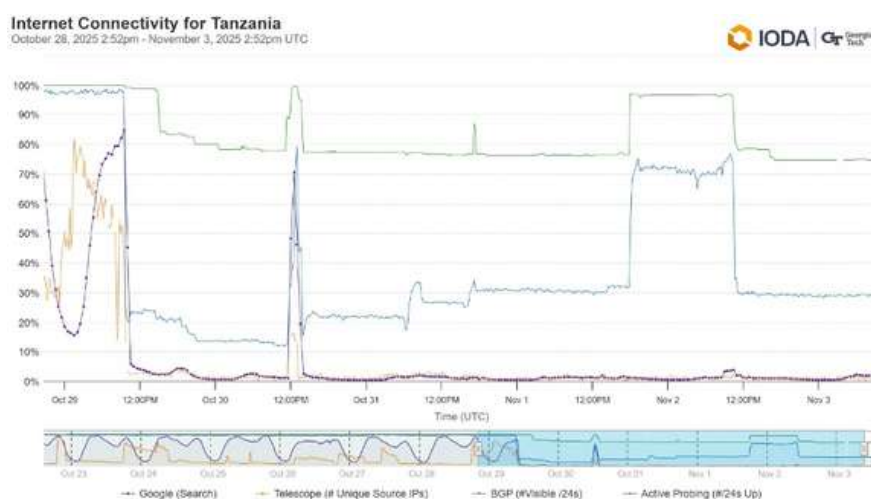


Figure 3: Evidence of Internet Shutdown in Tanzania from 29th October to 3rd November 2025 on the IODA.

^[10] Republic v. Jennifer Bilikwija @Niffer and 21 Others, P.I Case No 26388 of 2025, In the Resident Magistrate Court of Dar es Salaam at Kisutu.

^[11] Kumbusho Dawson X Post. Sheikh Majini called for Internet Shutdown five days before election and was killed on 29th October 2025.

^[12] See: TMC (2025). Advocacy Brief: Unmasking the Economic Impact of TikTok, X and Instagram Restrictions on Tanzanian Creators and Businesses.

^[13] See: Netblocks (2025). Determining the digital economy impact of internet shutdowns.

^[14] Heise Online (2025). "Digital Blackout": Internet Blockade in Tanzania Parallel to Elections.

^[15] Digital Watch Observatory (2025). National internet shutdown grips Tanzania during contested vote.

^[16] See: Standard Media(2025). Tanzania partially restores internet after five-day election blackout;

The Star (2025). Tanzania partially restores internet after 5-day shutdown; Tanzania: Social media still restricted; Internet restored five days after bloody protests over presidential poll, all accessed on November 6, 2025.

2.2 A Multi-Layered Technical Siege

The shutdown was not a simple "off switch" but a sophisticated, multi-layered attack on the information ecosystem.

1. Platform Blocking. In addition to the general blackout, authorities specifically targeted platforms used for real-time documentation and mobilization. This included disabling TikTok Live and Instagram Live and blocking access to WhatsApp, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and Telegram.^[17]

2. Throttling and Partial Restoration. Even after the "restoration" on November 3, network monitors and user reports (e.g., from OONI Obser) confirmed that "widespread restrictions" remained and that internet speed was still "limited".^[18] Since the day of Digital Blackout until November 11 2025 when this brief was developed, the Google services and Google products (example, Youtube, Google office products such as Google Docs, Gmails, Sheets, etc.). OONI data suggests that WhatsApp and TikTok were still not working without the help of a VPN.^[19] This demonstrates a "dimmer switch" approach, likely intended to prevent citizens from uploading the large video files that constituted evidence of the atrocities committed during the blackout.

2.3 Complicity of Mobile Network Operators (MNOs)

The MNOs were not neutral parties; they were active enablers of the state's strategy.

- **Pre-emptive Warning.** On October 28, a coalition of digital rights groups (the Net Rights Coalition) sent a public letter to the Tanzanian government. This letter was explicitly "Cc'd" to the CEOs of major MNOs, including Vodacom, Yas (Tigo), Airtel, and Halotel, warning them not to comply with any illegal shutdown orders.^[20]
- **Violation of Corporate Responsibility.** The MNOs uniformly complied with the state's directive, severing services to millions of customers and violating their own human rights and corporate social responsibility policies.

- **Evidence of Active Complicity.** The shutdown went beyond passive compliance. Reports from users indicate that MNOs, including Vodacom Tanzania, allegedly disabled their call centers during the blackout.^[21] This is a critical distinction, escalating their role from passive compliance to active complicity. Disabling customer service is an act of psychological warfare: it prevents citizens from reporting the outage or verifying its cause, amplifying their fear, confusion, and helplessness. It transforms the MNO from a "service provider" into an arm of the state's security apparatus.
- **Cynical Public Relations.** Vodacom's post-shutdown promise to "reimburse the bundles" is a tokenistic and cynical gesture, aimed at deflecting from this profound breach of public trust and its role in facilitating a human rights crisis.

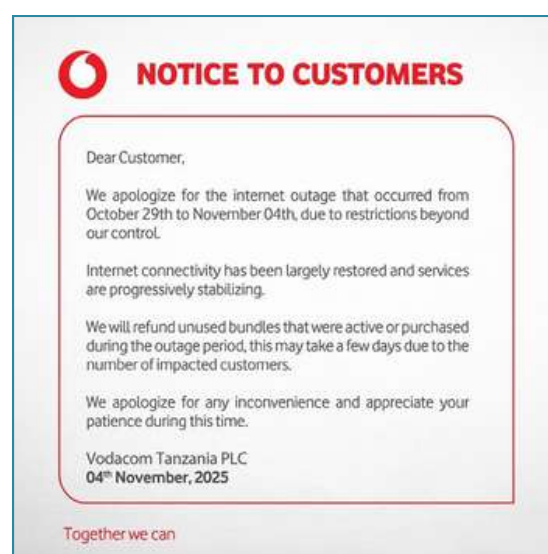


Figure 4: Vodacom Tanzania Notice to Customers

^[17] [How an internet blackout affected Tanzania's election](#), accessed November 5, 2025.

^[18] IODA Platform. [The internet connectivity shutdown in Tanzania between 29th October 2025 to 3rd November 2025 is visible](#).

^[19] Relevant OONI data suggests that WhatsApp and TikTok are still blocked in Tanzania: For [WhatsApp](#); for [TikTok](#); other data on shutdown can be obtained from IODA is a research lab at Georgia Tech university, monitoring internet connectivity worldwide in real-time. They provide a dashboard with alerts and open data on internet connectivity shutdowns around the world (<https://ioda.inetintel.cc.gatech.edu/>).

^[20] [Tanzania's digital battlefield heats up ahead of election](#) | Elections. Accessed November 5, 2025.

^[21] Insights from users affected with the Vodacom Call Centre services during the blackout.

Part 3: Evidence of Violence: Killings and Destruction Under Cover of Darkness

The primary purpose of the five-day shutdown was to provide a "cover of darkness" for a violent state crackdown, allowing security forces to operate with total impunity. The blackout was the means; the violence was the end.^[22]

3.1 Lethal Force and Military Deployment

In response to "country-wide" protests which erupted in Dar es Salaam, Mwanza, Shinyanga, Morogoro, and other towns the state responded with overwhelming force. The military was deployed to "help police quell riots". Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International both confirmed that security forces used "excessive force" including "live ammunition" and teargas, on what were described as "largely peaceful protesters".^[23]

3.2 The Casualty Discrepancy: The "Atrocity Information Gap"

During the 2025 General Election, the government's internet shutdown effectively obscured the true scale of violence, creating what observers have termed an "atrocity information gap." The official number of people killed remains unknown, as no verified figures have been released by the authorities.^[24] CHADEMA spokesperson John Kitoka claimed around 700 people were killed with other party officials suggesting as many as 1,000 fatalities.^[25] A security source told AFP that 700–800 people may have died nationwide, while Charles Kitima, Secretary-General of the Tanzania Episcopal Conference, stated that "hundreds" of people had perished. Furthermore, Chadema's communications director, Brenda Rupia, alleged that security forces were "secretly dumping bodies" to hide the scale of the deaths. In one documented instance, protesters were seen carrying the dead body of a man killed in the clashes, turning the victim into a symbol of the uprising.^[26]

Adding to these accounts, BBC Swahili reported that since the outbreak of election-related unrest, some families have claimed to have lost loved ones some confirmed dead, while others remain missing after fruitless searches in hospitals, mortuaries, and police stations. BBC further reported testimonies from health workers, including doctors in both public and private

hospitals, who alleged that vehicles had been collecting bodies and transporting them to undisclosed locations. The doctors requested anonymity citing security concerns. The BBC said efforts to obtain a government response on these allegations were unsuccessful.^[27] The mass killings were done in Dar es Salaam after the imposed curfew by IGP that people were not supposed to walk or stay outside by 18:00Hrs which was implemented from 29th October to 03rd November 2025.^[28] Despite the right to life being protected under the Tanzania Constitution Article 14, international instruments to which Tanzania have signed and ratified, it was violated in the blackout and come into right after restoration of internet.^[29] This vast discrepancy is the story. This allows the regime to dismiss the true number (which, per witness and security sources, is likely in the hundreds) as unverified "opposition propaganda." The shutdown was a tool to disable the 21st-century human rights verification framework.

In response to the lack of verified data, CHADEMA has launched an initiative calling on citizens to report cases of deaths, injuries, or missing persons via phone number 0716 484 242, under the coordination of Gerva Lyenda, requesting details such as the victim's name, age, occupation, place of the incident, and any available photo or video evidence.^[29] Similarly, the Tanzania Law Society (TLS), the national bar association issued a public notice inviting citizens with information on human rights violations or in need of legal assistance to submit reports through email: president@tls.or.tz or WhatsApp: 0779 626 282, under the leadership of President Adv. Boniface Mwabukusi.^[30]

However, these parallel efforts highlight the fragmentation of data collection information is being gathered in silos without coordination or a shared framework. Establishing a national digital repository to consolidate such reports could ensure better verification, coordination, and accessibility. With such a system, even citizens without smartphones could contribute through basic phone reporting, with data automatically transmitted into a central online database promoting transparency, accountability, and collective response to human rights violations.

^[22] See: The African Union (2025). Preliminary Statement of the African Union Election Observation Mission to the October 2025 General Elections in The United Republic of Tanzania: The African Union Election Observation Mission calls for urgent constitutional reforms and inclusive politics in the United Republic of Tanzania, 5 November 2025.

^[23] These can be confirmed by various reports from victims, families and widely circulating videos that sources cannot be shared here for security purposes and human dignity of the people died.

^[24] Ibid.

^[25] CBS News (2025). Tanzania political opposition says 700 people killed amid unrest over election that excluded leader's foes, accessed November 5, 2025.

^[26] GZERO Media (2025). Shutting down dissent: Tanzania's election goes offline accessed November 5, 2025.

^[27] BBC Swahili. Reports on the loves losts and others remains missing in Tanzania after 2025 General Election.

^[28] The Chanzo (2025). A Curfew is Not a License to Kill: Tanzania Must Answer for Its Dead.

^[29] See: Article 14 of The Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania; Article 4 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981); Article 6(1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; and The UN Human Rights Committee, in its General Comment on the Right to Life which affirms that the right to life is a "supreme right from which no derogation is permitted, even in situations of armed conflict and other public emergencies."

^[30] See: TLS (2025). Tangazo kwa Umma.

Part 4: The Economics of Repression: Quantifying the Shutdown's Impact

The state's decision to deploy the shutdown was a calculated "economic trigger", transforming a political crisis into an immediate and catastrophic socio-economic and humanitarian one.

4.1 The Macro-Economic Cost

While the human cost of the shutdown remains immeasurable, the financial loss is quantifiable. According to the NetBlocks Cost of Shutdown Tool (COST), which applies methodologies developed by the Brookings Institution Tanzania's six-day, seven-hour nationwide internet shutdown between 29 October and 3 November 2025 inflicted an estimated economic loss of USD 86,685,776. In local currency, this amounts to approximately TZS 204,058,316,031, based on the May 2023 exchange rate, or TZS 213,230,278,605.23 at the prevailing rate of 6 November 2025.

This disruption, in an economy with over 49 million internet users, represents a massive self-inflicted economic wound halting e-commerce, disrupting mobile money services, stalling logistics and communications, and deterring investor confidence. The scale of loss underscores how internet shutdowns

not only silence citizens but also jeopardize Tanzania's position as one of Africa's fastest-growing digital economies, undermining both short-term productivity and long-term economic resilience.

4.2 Paralysis of the Digital Economy and Critical Services

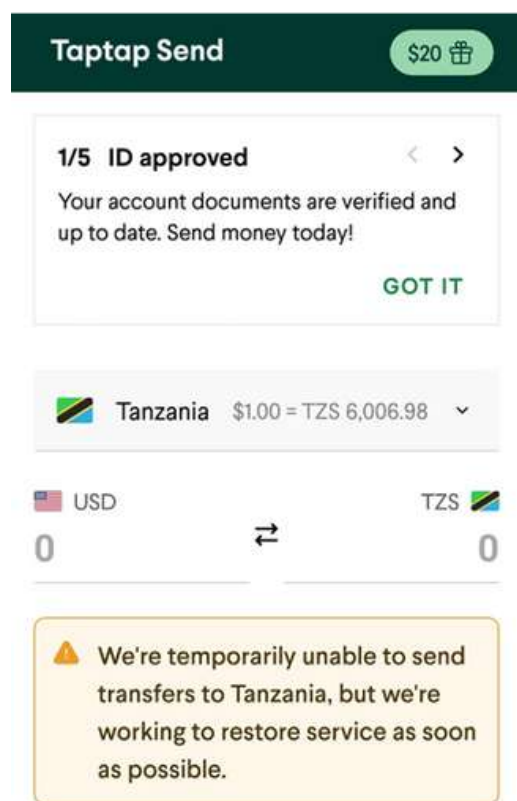
The shutdown choked off all modern commerce and social infrastructure.

- **Financial Services.** The most devastating impact was on digital finance. Nala, a major international remittance platform, was forced to shut down its operations.^[31]
- **Logistics and Travel.** The blackout caused chaos in the transport sector. Passengers were left "stranded at the country's airports, boats, bus stations, cities or centres" unable to retrieve digital flight details or check in, reschedule or cancel their bookings.^[32]
- **Regional Trade.** The unrest and shutdown "significantly disrupted" trade across the entire East African block.^[33]

4.3 The Human Livelihood Crisis

This economic cost was felt as a direct humanitarian crisis. The testimony of Nala's CEO, Benjamin Fernandes, provides critical, specific evidence of the shutdown's human cost. He stated the blackout had "devastating consequences," as "families in Tanzania couldn't receive money from loved ones abroad".^[33] This was not a simple inconvenience; it was a threat to life. Fernandes elaborated that this was "not about tech it's about food, medicine, and survival," and reported receiving calls from users who were unable to send or receive money for emergency hospital bills.^[34]

The government, in its bid for political control, knowingly and willingly severed the financial lifelines of its own citizens. This action proves that the state itself is the single greatest threat to Tanzania's digital economy. This humanitarian crisis was corroborated by U.S. and U.K. travel advisories, which warned of "shortages of cash, fuel and food" in the country as a direct result of the unrest and shutdown.^[35]



^[31] TechCabal (2025). [How Tanzania internet blackout halted Nala payments for 18 hours](#).

^[32] See: [Security forces and protesters clash following disputed election in Tanzania](#); UN says 10 dead, accessed November 5, 2025.

^[33] TechCabal (2025). [How Tanzania internet blackout halted Nala payments for 18 hours](#).

^[34] Ibid.

^[35] See: [U.S Travel Advisories for Tanzania](#); [UK Tanzania travel advice](#).

Table 4.1: Multi-Sector Impact Analysis of the 2025 Shutdown

Sector	Specific Impact
Macro-Economy	Estimated TZS 213,230,278,605.23 at the prevailing rate of 6 November 2025 in lost GDP (Based on NetBlocks methodology).
Financial Services	Complete halt of international remittances (e.g., Nala); mobile money services paralyzed.
Humanitarian	Inability to pay for food, medicine, and emergency hospital bills.
Supply Chain	Nationwide shortages of cash, fuel, and food reported.
Logistics/Travel	Passengers stranded at airports; domestic flights canceled; travel disrupted.
Digital Economy	E-commerce, digital services, and platform-based livelihoods (e.g., ride-hailing, delivery) frozen for 5 days.
Human Rights	Inability to document or report killings, arbitrary arrests, and state-sanctioned violence.

Part 5: The Information Vacuum: Misinformation and State Narrative Control

The shutdown must be understood as the ultimate act of information warfare. It was a tool to create a "data void" that only the state could fill.

5.1 The Shutdown as the Ultimate Disinformation Tool

Governments frequently justify shutdowns as a necessary tool to prevent the spread of "misinformation and disinformation".^[36] The Tanzanian case proves the opposite is true: the shutdown is the disinformation.^[37] It is an "epistemological attack" that creates a total "information vacuum",^[38] making it impossible for citizens to discern truth from rumor. This void is then filled by the state's monopoly on information. While 49 million

citizens were in a 6-days blackout, the only "truth" available was the state-run broadcast, which methodically announced the 97.6 percent to 98 percent landslide victory for President Hassan.^[39] Apart from that there were misinformations circulating among the people including the allegations that water was poisoned in Dar es Salaam, the found of the kidnapped Former Ambassador Humphrey Polepole who was kidnapped two weeks prior election and others. These were caused by lack of credible sources or verification means due to the internet shutdown.^[40]

^[36] [Information Controls and Internet Shutdowns in African Elections: The Politics of Electoral Integrity and Abuses of Power](#) - ResearchGate, accessed November 5, 2025.

^[37] See: TMC (2025). [ADVOCACY BRIEF: Censorship, Surveillance, and Digital Freedoms: Navigating Tanzania's Online Space Ahead of the 2025 General Election](#); TMC (2025). [Advocacy Brief: A Civic Tech and Cybersecurity Lens on Tanzania's 2025 General Elections](#).

^[38] *Ibid.*

^[39] Al Jazeera (2025). [Tanzanian President Samia Suluhu Hassan declared winner of election](#) - accessed November 6, 2025 misinformations.

^[40] Testimonies from people and common shared messages across normal texts and phone calls on various issues happening.



Figure 1 The Citizen showing the shock, terror and challenges in October Election.

5.2 Post-Shutdown Narrative Control and Censorship

The state's actions after restoring service reveal its true intent.

- **Mass-Text Threats.** As the internet "slowly" returned, the police sent a mass text message to citizens. This message did not warn against "false information." Instead, it warned citizens not to share photos or videos that "may cause panic" or "degrade someone's dignity".^[41] This is a de facto state confession. The language implies (a) such videos exist, (b) they are true (as true images of violence are what "cause panic"), and (c) the state's primary goal is not truth, but the suppression of evidence of its own violence.
- **Digital Mop-Up.** Social media pages that had collected evidence of the killings were "pulled down" after the shutdown, effectively "cleaning" the digital crime scene.

- **Media Capitulation.** Traditional media was also silenced, even the Clouds Media, Could not disclose the source of their employee's death one Master Tindwa Mtopa who was shot dead at home despite not being part of the so called alleged protesters.^[42] The coerced apology from The Citizen newspaper for its "failure to keep the public informed"^[3] demonstrates there is a total capture of the independent press in Tanzania.

Part 6: Political and Diplomatic Fallout

The shutdown successfully achieved its short-term domestic goal the consolidation of authoritarian rule but at the cost of catastrophic international standing.

6.1 Domestic: Consolidation of Authoritarian Rule

President Hassan was declared the winner with 97.6-98 percent of the votes a margin "unheard of in the region" and more closely associated with entrenched authoritarian states.^[43] Her inauguration was a "tightly controlled ceremony" closed to the public and held at a military parade ground. This choice of venue was a powerful symbol, demonstrating that her power was now secured not by public mandate, but by the security forces.^[44]

President Hassan's public remarks have reflected a firm position. She attributed the protests to external actors and, while referencing President Mkapa's earlier statement, dismissed critical assessments from election observers, noting that their recommendations had been "received," but their directives "declined."

The official press statement from Foreign Minister Mahmoud Thabit Kombo, which attempted to normalize the election, has been widely disputed as "sugarcoated" and contrary to all factual evidence.^[45]

6.2 Regional: The SADC Contradiction and AU Reports

The regional response to Tanzania's 2025 General Election exposed a stark contradiction. The SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM), led by Malawi's Richard Msowoya, issued a preliminary statement concluding that the election "fell short of the requirements of the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections,"^[46] noting that in many areas, voters were unable to freely express their democratic will. In contrast, the African Union Election Observation Mission (AUEOM), deployed across Tanzania and Zanzibar under H.E. Mokgweetsi Masisi and comprising 72 observers from 31 African countries, preliminarily reported that the elections were conducted in a generally peaceful environment and,

^[41] 10TV (2025). [Tanzanians warned against sharing photos as internet partially resumes and normalcy returns in towns](#).

^[42] See: Clouds FM IG (2025). [Buriani Master Tindwa Mtopa](#).

^[43] See: [Tanzania President Hassan wins disputed election with more than 97% of vote, official results show](#); Washington Post (2025). [Tanzania's President Hassan wins disputed election amid deadly protests](#), both accessed November 6, 2025.

^[44] See: TRT World (2025). [Samia Suluhu takes oath as Tanzania's president after deadly protests](#); BBC (2025). [Public barred as Tanzanian president sworn in](#).

^[45] [PRESS STATEMENT BY HON. MAHMOUD THABIT KOMBO, MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND EAST AFRICAN COOPERATION REGARDING 2025 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN TANZANIA](#), accessed November 5, 2025.

^[46] SADEC (2015). [SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections](#).

overall, were free and fair, while also emphasizing the urgent need for constitutional reforms and inclusive political practices.^[47] This divergence between SADC's condemnation and the AU's cautious approval highlights both regional contradictions and the limitations of continental oversight, as each body's findings were influenced by differing methodologies, political sensitivities, and access to information, particularly given the internet shutdown and restrictions imposed by the Tanzanian government. The discrepancy has created confusion in the diplomatic record, undermining the credibility of regional election monitoring and illustrating the need for more transparent, coordinated, and independent observation frameworks in Africa.

6.3 International: Condemnation and Calls for Review

The international response to Tanzania's 2025 General Election was pronounced, marked by both condemnation and calls for review.

The European Union deployed observers who noted significant irregularities and expressed concern over restrictions on political freedoms and media access, calling for urgent reforms to ensure genuine democratic participation.^[48] The United States, through the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC), which had issued pre-election warnings regarding suppression of dissent, post-election urged a thorough review of bilateral relations with Tanzania in light of the reported violence and irregularities.^[49] In a rare diplomatic intervention, the Vatican, with Pope Leo XIV publicly condemning the violent clashes that resulted in numerous casualties, called on all parties to pursue dialogue and reconciliation.^[50] Collectively, these responses underscored international alarm over both the conduct of the elections and the human rights situation, while highlighting the pressure on Tanzania to restore transparency, accountability, and democratic integrity.

Part 7: Evidence-Based Recommendations

This report concludes that the 2025 Tanzanian general election was defined by a state-orchestrated digital blackout. This blackout was not a side-effect of the crisis; it was the central weapon used to enable, execute, and conceal a violent, undemocratic power grab. The shutdown facilitated mass human rights abuses and a severe humanitarian economic crisis.

7.1 To the Government of Tanzania

- **To Restore All Communications.** End the ongoing throttling and partial restrictions, and fully restore internet connectivity nationwide, including unrestricted access to all social media and messaging platforms.
- **Release All Political Detainees or Prosecute.** Immediately and unconditionally release all political prisoners, opposition leaders, journalists, and protestors arrested for exercising their right to peaceful assembly, and prosecute those who may have criminal offences i.e vandalism during the protest.
- **Ensure Independent Accountability.** Establish a truly independent and transparent commonwealth or international judicial inquiry into the killings, abductions, and use of lethal force by security forces. Ensure all perpetrators, including those in the chain of command, are held accountable in fair trials.
- **Repeal Repressive Legislation.** Begin an urgent review and repeal of repressive legislation, including sections of the Cybercrimes Act and TCRA regulations that grant the state sweeping, arbitrary powers to order censorship, surveillance, and shutdowns.

7.2 To Tanzanian Civic Space Actors (CSOs, Journalists, and Legal Professionals)

- **Continue the Provision of Emergency Legal and Humanitarian Aid.** Coordinate and scale up efforts to provide direct legal aid to victims of state violence and those arbitrarily detained, while also supporting their families.
- **Archive the Evidence Online and Establish Offline Documentation Hubs.** Create a funded, secure, decentralized archive to preserve all digital evidence (videos, photos, testimonials) of the atrocities, including content from various sources, while creating a secure, offline, and decentralized methods for citizens to submit and store evidence of human rights violations, thereby creating an analog archive that counteracts digital blackouts and evidence-tampering.
- **Invest in Resilient Digital Security.** Prioritize and adopt advanced digital security protocols, encryption, and circumvention tools to protect activists, journalists, and sources from intensified state surveillance.
- **MNO Accountability.** Initiate legal and international advocacy campaigns against the MNOs (Vodacom, Yas, Airtel, Halotel) for their active complicity. The alleged disabling of call centers and failure to notify subscribers on the internet shutdown must be investigated as a breach of their corporate and social responsibilities.

^[47] Preliminary Statement of the African Union Election Observation Mission to the October 2025 General Elections in The United Republic of Tanzania.

^[48] EU (2025). Tanzania: Statement by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the elections in Tanzania.

^[49] See: Shaheen, Booker, Coons, Kaine, Rosen Statement Ahead of Elections in Tanzania, accessed November 5, 2025.

^[50] Vatican News (2025). Pope appeals for ceasefire and humanitarian access for Sudan and calls for peace and dialogue in Tanzania following post-election clashes that have caused hundreds of deaths.

7.3 To the African Continent Regional Bodies

- The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR). Formally censure the Government of Tanzania for the gross violation of Article 9 of the African Charter and its own Resolution 580 on Internet Shutdowns and Elections, and Launch an independent, international investigation into the post-election killings, specifically addressing the "atrocities information gap" and the allegations of "secretly dumped bodies".

7.4 To the International Community

- Implement the SFRC's Call. Immediately act upon the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee's recommendation to "review" all bilateral relations. This review must include all non-humanitarian aid, security cooperation (PEPFAR), and trade agreements.
- Impose Targeted Sanctions. Utilize Magnitsky-style sanctions against the specific Tanzanian officials responsible for ordering the shutdown and the subsequent lethal violence.

8. Conclusion

The 2025 Tanzanian general election will be remembered not as a democratic process, but as a state-orchestrated consolidation of power, executed under the cover of a digital blackout. The internet shutdown was not a peripheral event; it was the central weapon, deliberately deployed to enable, execute, and conceal a violent, undemocratic power grab. This blackout allowed the state to create an "atrocities information gap," silencing the cries of victims and making a true death toll unknowable. It choked the economy, severing humanitarian lifelines for food and medicine. It disabled all forms of 21st-century human rights verification, forcing media into capitulation and allowing the state to broadcast its 98% victory into a void of its own making.

The findings in this report are not a historical record; they are an active indictment. The evidence presented from the complicity of MNOs to the failure of regional bodies demands more than condemnation. It demands the immediate implementation of the recommendations outlined herein. Accountability for the hundreds killed and the millions silenced is not optional. The international community, African bodies, and Tanzanian civic actors must act decisively to ensure that this model of digital authoritarianism and state-sanctioned violence is not, and never will be, normalized.

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*"Championing Technological Adaptation and Digital Transformation
within a Democratic Digital Framework"*