



DEFEND DEFENDERS

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project

UN Human Rights Council – 48th regular session

Item 2: General Debate

Oral statement

Delivered by: Nicolas Agostini

Madam President,

We addressed **Ethiopia** during the Tigray-focused debate under this agenda item.

At the last session, we mentioned positive developments in **Tanzania**. Upon assuming office, President Samia Suluhu Hassan indicated that she would uphold freedom of expression and due process. She sent positive signals for civic space, including ordering the reopening of media outlets that had been closed or suspended. We welcomed these steps, which took place ahead of Tanzania's third Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

Unfortunately, in less than a month, Tanzanian authorities ordered the suspension of two newspapers, *Uhuru* and *Raia Mwema*, for publishing "false information." Additionally, opposition leader Freeman Mbowe was arrested, just before he was due to launch a constitutional reform programme. He is facing economic crimes- and financing of terrorism-related charges. We call on President Hassan's government to deliver on the promise of a more open Tanzania, in line with its Constitution and history of respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Madam President,

As **Covid-19** continues to spread, reporting on the human rights dimensions of the Covid-19 crisis remains essential.

Thank you for your attention.