



DEFENDDEFENDERS

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project

UN Human Rights Council – 52nd regular session

Item 2: General Debate

Oral statement

Delivered by: Estella Kabachwezi

Mr. President,

DefendDefenders' core mandate is the protection of and support to human rights defenders (HRDs) in the East and Horn of Africa sub-region.

Our last report, "[Pushing Boundaries](#)," shows how the growth of youth movements and the critical role played by youth HRDs in the sub-region make them targets for attacks by state and non-state actors. The report identifies trends of youth mobilisation, including protests, digital activism, and *artivism* (activism through art).

Youth HRDs form both organised and informal movements that seek to bring about societal change and oppose injustice. We found that the scale of repression is proportional to whether issues youth HRDs are involved in are contentious. Youth movements focusing on gender equality, the environment, and development are relatively freer to operate than those fighting for civil and political rights.

We encourage the High Commissioner to monitor these trends and to continue to enhance the work of his Office regarding civic space.

Mr. President,

We salute the opening of the civic space in Tanzania, further exemplified by President Samia Suluhu Hassan's commitment to [host](#) the 77th session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR). We emphasise the need to engage with Maasai communities affected by government projects in the Loliondo/Ngorongoro area.

Thank you for your attention.