November 5, 2026

IDU Statement Ahead of the Verdict in the Treason Trial of Tundu Lissu

The International Democracy Union (IDU) condemns in the strongest terms the politically motivated prosecution of IDU Executive Vice Chair Tundu Lissu, Chairman of CHADEMA, Tanzania's main opposition party, ahead of the High Court's judgment in his treason trial, expected on Friday, November 6, 2026.

Mr Lissu has been imprisoned since April 9, 2025, for nothing more than calling for free and fair elections. Demanding electoral reform is not treason. It is the most basic act of democratic citizenship, and the fact that such a charge was ever brought before a court is itself an indictment of the Tanzanian authorities. For nearly nineteen months, Mr Lissu has been held behind bars, subjected to repeated delays, confronted with concealed witnesses he cannot see, and denied confidential access to his lawyers. A man who survived an assassination attempt in 2017 has reportedly been denied the specialised medical check-ups he requires throughout his detention.

Tomorrow's judgment is a defining test for Tanzania. Treason is a capital offence. A conviction would mean that the leader of the country's opposition faces a possible death sentence for speaking out. It would declare peaceful dissent a crime against the state, endanger every Tanzanian who dares to challenge those in power, and pave the way for the conviction of dozens of CHADEMA leaders and members facing similar charges. It would all but extinguish organised political opposition in Tanzania and confirm that its courts have become an instrument of political repression.

The IDU demands the immediate and unconditional release of Tundu Lissu, the withdrawal of all politically motivated charges against him and against detained CHADEMA leaders and members, and full respect for their fundamental rights. The IDU calls on democratic governments, the African Union, the East African Community and the Southern African Development Community to make clear, before the verdict is delivered, that a conviction would carry serious consequences for their relations with Tanzania.

The IDU stands firmly with its partners in the Democracy Union of Africa (DUA), with Tundu Lissu, with CHADEMA, and with all Tanzanians in their struggle to choose their government freely.