



Statement on mistreatment of Mr Boniface Mwangi and Ms Agather Atuhaire

The CLA issued a Statement on the 23rd May 2025 regarding the detention and deportation of Observers of the trial in Tanzania of opposition leader Tundu Lissu.

Since then, highly disturbing reports have emerged of arbitrary arrest, detention, and torture of Mr Boniface Mwangi, a Kenyan journalist and Ms Agather Atuhaire an activist from Uganda who also intended to attend and observe the trial of Tundu Lissu.

This trial was a matter of significant public interest in East Africa and beyond. However, as the previous Statement of the CLA on this matter observed, the authorities in Tanzania seemed determined to *“impede observers from attending the trial and to curtail open justice through a public hearing in the Tanzanian courts”*.

While detention at the airport and forced deportation is wholly unacceptable, the reports of torture, degrading treatment and flagrant breaches of international law and obligations are deplorable.

The CLA notes the impactful Statement of the East Africa Law Society issued on 24th May 2025. In this, EALS recounts how Mr Boniface Mwangi *“was released and abandoned showing visible signs of torture, unable to walk unassisted and requiring urgent medical attention”*

EALS also recounts how Ms Agather Atuhaire *“was released at a Uganda border post exhibiting signs of torture and requiring urgent medical attention”* Subsequently, harrowing details of torture and physical and sexual abuse have emerged.

These are shocking and appalling violations of the rule of law that should be unreservedly condemned. The prolonged detention of Mr Mwangi and Ms Atuhaire is in violation of the Criminal Procedure Act of Tanzania. Keeping these persons incommunicado without access to legal advice and representation is another breach of the Criminal Procedure Act.

EALS in their Statement detail multiple breaches of international standards and obligations of Tanzania, including under the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights.

The CLA reminds all Commonwealth members that they have agreed to accept as their fundamental values the Commonwealth Charter which states that all members respect the rule of law and agree to adhere to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The CLA:

- joins with EALS in condemning the torture and physical abuse of Mr Boniface Mwangi and Ms Agather Atuhairi;
- supports EALS in its calls for accountability of the perpetrators;
- calls upon the authorities to adhere to and uphold their constitutional and international obligations;
- and demands that the authorities in Tanzania urgently take steps to restore public trust that the rule of law is respected, maintained and uniformly applied without regard to persons or personalities.

Commonwealth Lawyers Association (CLA)

6th June 2025

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