



PRESS STATEMENT

**The Police Reforms Working Group condemns
the enforced disappearance and torture of Human Rights Defender Boniface Mwangi,
calls for the immediate release of Agather Atuhaire**

Nairobi, 22 May 2025: The Police Reforms Working Group Kenya (PRWG-K) has this morning learnt that Mr. Boniface Mwangi, a renowned human rights defender, was dumped on the Kenya-Tanzania Border. Whereas we are relieved that Mr. Mwangi has been found alive, he has visible signs of torture. We therefore strongly condemn his unlawful arrest, detention, and torture by Tanzanian law enforcement. **We express deep concern for the fate of Ugandan Human Rights Defender Agather Atuhaire, who was last seen on Monday in the custody of the Tanzanian authorities.** Agather was arrested with Boniface Mwangi and has yet to be released or produced in a court of law.

The two East Africans were arrested while on a mission with several other East Africans to observe the treason trial of Tanzanian opposition leader Tundu Lissu. A habeas corpus application had been filed for both Mr. Mwangi and Ms. Atuhaire.

PRWG-K notes with grave concern the rising repression of opposition leaders, activists, and journalists in Tanzania and Uganda, two significant member states of the East African Community (EAC). Tanzania's actions and statements by the Head of State this week violate Article 13 (6) of the Tanzanian Constitution, which provides for fair hearing, equality before the law, human dignity and freedom from torture or inhuman or degrading punishment or treatment. Tanzania's actions further violate the EAC Treaty, particularly Articles 6 and 7 (2), which obligate states to democracy, the rule of law, and human rights.

The cruel and degrading treatment inflicted upon Mwangi contravenes international law, including the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the UN Convention Against Torture (UNCAT), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. Furthermore, international customary law obligates every state to act against those who torture.

The Government of Tanzania cannot hide behind national sovereignty to justify committing serious crimes and human rights violations against its own citizens and other East Africans. We remain very concerned with the continued enforced disappearance of Ugandan journalist Agather Atuhaire, detained alongside Mwangi.

Consequently, we demand the following actions to be taken:

1. Unconditional Release – Tanzanian authorities must free East African journalist Agather Atuhare and all Tanzanian activists currently detained in violation of international and regional human rights standards.
2. Independent Investigation – The Tanzanian government must allow an impartial probe into the torture allegations, and the perpetrators must be held accountable.
3. Regional and International Accountability – The East African Community and Tanzania's international partners must deploy fact-finding missions into these and other human rights violations that are being accelerated ahead of the November elections.
4. Diplomatic Intervention – The Community of Nations, including regional and international human rights mechanisms such as the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, the Office of the Human Rights Commissioner and the Committee Against Torture alongside the Kenyan and Ugandan governments must urgently and publicly express concerns demand the protection of their citizens' rights in Tanzania.
5. Media & Civil Society Safeguards – EAC states must end the criminalisation of dissent and uphold freedom of expression.

The PRWG-K stands in solidarity with Boniface Mwangi, Agather Atuhare, Tundu Lissu, and all victims of state-sponsored repression in East Africa. We call upon the African Union, UN Human Rights Council, and international partners to pressure Tanzania and allied regimes to cease these violations. Silence is complicity, and the EAC must not become a syndicate of autocracy and an international crime scene.

Signed,

Notes:

The Police Reforms Working Group is an alliance of national and grassroots organisations committed to professional and rule of law policing. They include Amnesty International Kenya, Defenders Coalition, Katiba Institute, Kenya Human Rights Commission, The Kenyan Section of International Commission of Jurists (ICJ Kenya), International Justice Mission (IJM-K), HAKI Africa, Kariobangi Paralegal Network, Women Empowerment Link, Social Welfare Development Program, Independent Medical Legal Unit, Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Kenya, International Centre for Transitional Justice, Social Justice Centres Working Group, Usalama Reforms Forum, Transparency International - Kenya, Shield For Justice, Wangu Kanja Foundation, Peace Brigades International, Constitution and Reform Education Consortium.