

**PRESS STATEMENT  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**10<sup>th</sup> April 2015**

**Stockholm, Sweden**

**FREEZING OF HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS' ACCOUNTS IN KENYA**

Human Rights Agenda (HURIA), The National Coalition for Human Rights Defenders-Kenya (NCHRD-K), the Eastern Horn of Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP) and Civil Rights Defenders has learnt, with shock, of the intention of the Inspector General of Police of Kenya to freeze the bank accounts of two highly respected Kenyan human rights organizations.

According to Gazette Notice 2326 of 7<sup>th</sup> April 2015, the Inspector General has listed both *Muslims for Human Rights* (MUHURI) and *Haki Africa* amongst 85 individuals and institutions that are notified of the intention to specify them as a 'terrorist entity' under the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2012. Under the terms of the Gazette Notice, the two organizations were required, within 24 hours, to demonstrate why they should not be declared as 'specified entities'. Both organizations have subsequently found their bank accounts to be frozen.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act 2012 defines a 'Specified Entity' as a person, group of persons, trust, partnership, fund or an unincorporated association or organization reasonably believed to be committed or prepared to commit; attempted to commit; or participated in or facilitated the commission of, a terrorist act; or acting on behalf of; at the direction of; or in association with terrorist groups.

This definition does not in any way relate to the valuable human rights work of the two organizations listed in the Gazette Notice. As peer human rights organizations, we have directly worked with both *MUHURI* and *Haki Africa* in our attempt to counter violent extremism and improving the general security situation at the coast.

Whilst we fully support the Government's intention to strongly deal with terrorism in the wake of the killing of 147 university students from Garissa University, and other horrendous acts of terror committed to innocent civilians, we deem the notice as short-sighted and meant to intimidate not only the two organizations but the whole civil society fraternity.

Kenyan law requires that before the accounts of the specified organizations are frozen, they are notified and within 24 hours demonstrate why they should not be declared as specified entities. However, the two organizations only learnt of the notice through the media, after the 24 hours had passed, leading to the freezing of their bank accounts.

As human rights organizations, we affirm that the work of the two organizations has been consistent, exemplary and principled on defending the rights of all Kenyans. They must not be used as scapegoats in the government's failure to deal with radicalization. We therefore urge the Inspector General to rescind his intention

seeking to recommend specification of the two organizations. While we urge our colleagues to provide the explanation as required by law; we equally urge the Government to provide any information that led to the general clustering through the gazette notice of the two organizations as specified entities.

An effective counter-terrorism strategy can only succeed if both civil society and the government work closely together, by supporting state and non-state actors' programs to counter violent extremism. Continuous antagonism of civil society will only serve to aggravate the situation. It is high time that the Government of Kenya acknowledges the important role played by civil society in promoting tolerance and resilience in the ongoing fight against terrorism. Civil society is an integral part of any democratic society and the Government of Kenya must desist from incapacitating it.

We call on the international community to put pressure on the Kenya government to respect the constitution and its international obligations.

While here in Sweden, we will be meeting the United Nations Special Rapporteur for the situation of Human Rights Defenders to file a request for investigation on the deteriorating situation of Human Rights Defenders at the Coast of Kenya. This will happen in the midst of a gathering of more than 160 Human Rights Defenders from all over the world here in Stockholm, Sweden.

We wish to express our solidarity with our peer organizations and reaffirm our commitment to countering violent extremism through just and transparent ways.

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