

AGOA Review 2019
Summary of Testimony
Human Rights Watch

AGOA eligibility requires that a country has established, or is making continual progress toward establishing, the rule of law, political pluralism, and the right to due process, a fair trial, and equal protection under the law. However, Human Rights Watch respectfully submits that Tanzania, since President John Magufuli came to power in 2015, has seen a sharp backslide in respect for the rule of law, political pluralism and equal rights.

The government has clawed back basic freedoms of association and expression, undermining both media and civil society. It has enacted new legislation and enforced existing laws that repress independent reporting and restrict the work of media, civil society organizations and political opposition groups.

Authorities have censored and suspended newspapers and radio stations, arbitrarily deregistered civil society organizations, failed to carry out credible investigations into disappearances and attempts on the lives of activists, journalists and opposition figures, and used the judicial system, to detain and bring trumped up charges against many of them. In most cases, those most responsible for these abuses were police and security agents, district and regional commissioners, and officials responsible for regulating the media authority officials.

The government has also targeted vulnerable groups. It has deprived girls of equal access to education, through a policy that excludes pregnant girls and teenage mothers from schooling. It has initiated a crackdown on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, closing down inclusive health services, depriving them of access to HIV prevention tools, raiding workshops on health and human rights by credible Tanzanian and international organizations, and conducting arbitrary arrests and forced anal examinations, a discredited method of seeking evidence of homosexual conduct, which can amount to a form of torture.

Human Rights Watch's testimony will include further detail with regard to these violations of human rights, which raise serious concerns regarding Tanzania's lack of progress in line with AGOA's eligibility requirements.