

Tanzania detains Watetezi TV journalist over investigation of police

The Committee to Protect Journalists said it is concerned for the welfare of investigative journalist Joseph Gandye, who was arrested yesterday and handed over to police on whom he had reported critically, alleging they had abused other detainees.



Tanzanian police on August 22 detained Watetezi TV journalist Joseph Gandye, who reported on allegations that police had abused detainees. Credit: CPJ/Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition.

Police summoned Gandye, a production editor and reporter with Watetezi TV, [to appear](#) at Urafiki police station in Dar es Salaam, where they questioned him in the presence of his lawyer about his reporting, according to [a statement](#) from the Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition, a non-governmental coalition that owns Watetezi TV. Police said they arrested Gandye on [suspicion of publishing false news](#) in contravention of the Cyber Crimes Act, according to a Facebook post from the coalition.

Under Tanzania's [Cyber Crime Act](#), persons convicted of publishing “false, deceptive, misleading or inaccurate” information face a minimum of three years in prison and/or a fine of at least 5 million Tanzanian shillings (US\$2,174).

Police in Dar es Salaam arrested Gandye at the request of their colleagues in the central region of Iringa and transferred him today to Iringa, according to Watetezi TV and [a report](#) by the news website *Mwanahalisi Online*. In [a tweet](#), Watetezi TV said that police in Iringa asked the journalist to identify officers allegedly involved in the mistreatment of detainees.

“Tanzanian police should immediately release Watetezi TV journalist Joseph Gandye and ensure he is returned safely to Dar es Salaam,” said CPJ Sub-Saharan Africa representative Muthoki Mumo. “Journalists should be free to investigate allegations of wrongdoing without fear of being questioned or detained themselves, especially not by the very police on whom they have reported critically.”

Gandye’s arrest is in connection to reports [broadcast by Watetezi TV](#) from August 9 that alleged police at the Mafinga station in Iringa beat detainees and forced them to sexually abuse each other, according to the Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition.

Gandye’s reports included interviews with men whose identities were protected and who alleged that police abused them at the direction of the managers of a company, for which they said they worked. A manager from the company, [who is interviewed in the report](#), said the company reported the men to police following a theft. CPJ was unable to find contact details for the company.

In an August 17 [report](#) by Watetezi TV, Iringa police commander Juma Bwire said that [following an investigation](#) police concluded there was no evidence of abuse.

Bwire told CPJ via phone today that the journalist was being questioned to clarify discrepancies between his reporting and medical reports into the detainees. He asked CPJ to call back later for further information. When CPJ called later today, no one answered and Bwire did not immediately respond to text messages.

CPJ called Tanzania Police Commissioner Simon Sirro today but he did not pick up his phone and did not immediately respond to text messages about Gandye’s arrest. Dar es Salaam Police Chief Lazaro Mambosasa [told Bloomberg](#) that he did not know about the incident.

CPJ has documented a deterioration of press freedom in Tanzania in recent years. The freelance journalist [Erick Kabendera](#) has been detained since July 29 and authorities have yet to provide a credible accounting of the fate of [Azory Gwanda](#), who has been missing since 2017.

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