

# **The emerging threat of terrorism in Tanzania: a case study of Amboni, Tanga**

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This study sought to examine the threat of terrorism in Tanzania. The increasing number of reported criminal incidents that involve using explosives (bombs) and firearms while targeting the police, innocent civilians, village and religious leaders in Tanga, Dar es Salaam, Mwanza, Arusha, the Coast regions and in some parts of Zanzibar was the impetus for conducting this study. This situation has raised concern among Tanzanians because they are not used to such killings, for example decapitating innocent people, burning churches and attacking foreigners. Amboni is selected as a case study because statistical reports from the ministry of home affairs in 2015 show that the area has received potential terrorist threats, which started in Tanga and spread to other regions between 2016 and 2017. Data were collected via documentary sources, interviews and focus group discussions. Terrorism is a crime. Normative theory states what is wrong and right in the community. Terrorism is a contested term; the one who is regarded as a terrorist in one community is considered a freedom fighter in another community. Therefore, no single theory can best describe terrorism but rather a comprehensive lance of other theories, such as the rational choice theory.

Research reveals some confusion over the categorisation of these incidents. On one hand, the incidents are regarded as acts of terrorism. The police have arrested the suspects; however, no enough evidence is available to support them in dealing with the suspects. On the other hand, other incidents are not regarded as acts of terrorism; for instance, the Amboni incident is regarded as a confrontation between the police and a criminal gang, which was involved in armed robbery in Tanga, Coast Region and Dar es Salaam. Since terrorism is a global challenge, it does not spare Tanzania from attacks (cf. the 1998 US Embassy bombing in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania). It is recommended that awareness of terrorism threats should be raised. Moreover, structural reforms in the security agencies to respond to the early warning systems are needed.