

HAMZA JOHARI:

The legal eagle shaping Tanzania's governance after his flight from aviation

In the dynamic and ever-evolving landscape of Tanzanian public service, few names resonate with the same level of respect and authority as Hamza S. Johari.

Some people might have been exposed to this name when he was appointed Attorney General (AG) but Johari's public service started well before that. In fact, his appointment as AG only cemented his longstanding career, notably in legal fraternity. With a distinguished career that straddles both the legal and aviation sectors, Johari has steadily risen through the ranks to become one of the most influential figures in the country's governance framework.

His recent appointment as Attorney General in August 2024 is a testament not only to his legal acumen but also to his administrative competence and unwavering commitment to public service.

Johari is a man whose journey from legal scholar to aviation leader, and now to the pinnacle of the legal system, paints a picture of a rare breed of civil servant -one who combines deep technical knowledge with an exceptional ability to lead and innovate.

Early life and education

Hamza Johari's story begins in Mtwara Tanzania, where he was born and raised. From a young age, Johari exhibited a passion for law, governance, and systems that drive development and public order.

His academic journey was shaped by this early passion, which saw him pursue a Bachelor of Laws (LLB Hons) degree, as a beginner to building the foundation of his legal expertise. But this, which to some is a milestone, was not enough for Johari, who went further and earned a Master of Laws (LLM) degree specializing in International Laws. After earning his law degree with excellent academic performance, Johari decided to specialize in International Law.

Following the completion of his Master's degree, he spent a year working at a prestigious law firm in Ukraine, where he gained substantial experience in Corporate Law and contract negotiations.

In addition to his law degree and master's in International Law, Johari is recognized as an expert in several areas, including corporate law, contract

negotiations, aviation law, and the international law of the sea.

Passing on the knowledge

In an interview with Business Insider, he expressed his confidence in discussing or teaching these subjects anywhere and at any time. Recently, he taught International Law of the Sea at the People's Defence Forces' University. Johari also had the opportunity to teach at various universities across Tanzania. Notably, he taught International Transport Law (part-time) at Mzumbe University, covering maritime, air, and sea laws.

Positive feedback from Mzumbe reached the University of Dar es Salaam, which has an exchange program with Alexandria University in Egypt. As a beneficiary of this programme, Johari taught International Law of Carriage (Land, Air, and Sea). Johari has lectured on Aviation Law and Maritime Law at the National Institute of Transport (NIT), and he has also taught the Law of Insurance and the Law of the Sea at Alexandria University in Egypt.

Vast experience

His extensive experience includes leading various international negotiation teams on boundary disputes, including the notable case concerning Lake Nyasa between Tanzania and Malawi. Furthermore, he has headed negotiations for commercial contracts in sectors such as ports, oil, aviation, and infrastructure.

In the realm of aviation, Johari has led bilateral agreements between Tanzania and several countries, including the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, as well as negotiations involving China and the USA, spanning nine years.

From lawyer to Director General

While most legal professionals tend to remain in courtroom practice or academic circles, Johari's career took a unique turn. His transition into the aviation industry marked the beginning of a defining chapter.

Appointed as the Director General of the Tanzania Civil Aviation Authority (TCAA), Johari inherited an institution at the heart of one of the fastest-growing sectors in the country.



Attorney General (AG), Hamza S. Johari



Before becoming the Director-General of the Tanzania Civil Aviation Authority (TCAA), he served as the Executive Secretary of the TCAA Consumer Consultative Council (TCAA-CCC), a role that relied heavily on his legal expertise. Under his stewardship, TCAA underwent critical reforms, improving aviation safety, regulatory compliance, and infrastructure development.

Johari's leadership came at a time when Tanzania was increasingly integrating with global markets, making air travel and aviation security more vital than ever. He was instrumental in overseeing regulatory upgrades, enhancing airport safety protocols, and promoting investment in civil aviation.

International recognition

Johari's impact did not go unnoticed beyond Tanzania's borders. His exemplary leadership earned him notable appointments in regional and international aviation bodies. One such role was his election as Chairman for Africa at the Civil Air Navigation Services Organisation (CANSO) -an international body dedicated to advancing air traffic management globally.

As a member of CANSO's Executive Committee, Johari contributed to shaping policies and strategies for air navigation services across the continent, advocating for better integration and safety. Moreover, he served as Board Chairman of the East African Community Civil Aviation Safety and Security Oversight Agency (EAC-CASSOA). In this capacity, Johari spearheaded regional initiatives to ensure uniform aviation safety standards across EAC member states. His ability to navigate cross-border policy discussions and legal frameworks cemented his reputation as a diplomat and administrator par excellence.

First Presidential appointment

In August 2024, President Samia Suluhu Hassan appointed Hamza Johari as the Attorney General (AG) of the United Republic of Tanzania, succeeding Judge Dr. Eliezer Mbuki Feleshi.

Johari's role as Attorney General (AG) is his first presidential appointment. His appointment as TCAA Director-General was primarily facilitated through the relevant sector minister. As the Chief Government Legal Advisor, he aims to foster cultural change within the AG's office, a key part of his vision for the role. Cultural change is essential for fulfilling the office's duties, encompassing aspects such as teamwork, communication, and professional attire. Although each institution has its own culture, aligning this culture with the goals of the AG's office is crucial for success, and efforts to do so have already begun.

His appointment is somehow connected to good work which Johari done in collaboration with other people during the heated altercations over the government decision to recruit Dubai Port World (DPW) as investor in Tanzania ports.

At the time, to some people, Johari and his colleagues were regarded as ant-nationalists but after some months, it is now clear that the team which defended the government deal on the country ports were correct given the benefits which the country has started to reap from DPW investments.

His appointment as AG was widely praised by stakeholders in both the legal and civil aviation sectors. Many saw it as a strategic appointment - placing a seasoned professional with cross-sectorial experience at the helm of Tanzania's legal machinery.

As AG, Johari's role is multifaceted: He is the

government's chief legal advisor, oversees the drafting and interpretation of laws, represents the state in courts, and provides counsel on matters ranging from constitutional governance to international treaties. As the government's chief legal advisor, Johari steps into his new role at a crucial time when Tanzania is grappling with multibillion-dollar lawsuits. His background in international law is especially valuable as Tanzania navigates complex regional trade arrangements, cross-border disputes, and foreign investment contracts.

Vision for legal reforms and governance

Since assuming office, Hamza Johari has outlined a vision for a more transparent, accountable, and responsive legal system.

He emphasizes digital transformation in legal processes, increased access to justice, and stronger alignment between laws and development goals. His approach is informed by years of dealing with international institutions, where governance is increasingly measured by effectiveness and agility.

Johari is also an advocate for institutional independence and professional integrity within the Office of the Attorney General.

He has called for closer collaboration between the legal community, academia, and government institutions to ensure that Tanzanian laws remain progressive and in tune with the times.

Inspiration

Johari envisions shaping the government to achieve its objectives by ensuring a proper legal framework is in place. He is inspired by the changes implemented by Dubai's leader, Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, regarding legal reforms that align with governmental vision. He firmly believes that law is not neutral; it reflects the intentions of those who create it. In contrast, economic and business forces are neutral, waiting for the law to align with their

aims. This accolade later proved crucial as his career took on regional and global dimensions. His formal education, combined with a drive to understand not just the letter of the law but also its spirit, positioned Johari as a rising star in Tanzania's legal and regulatory environment.

Leadership style

Those who have worked with Johari describe him as principled, diligent, and intellectually sharp. He is known for his calm demeanor, an analytical mind, and a deep understanding of institutional frameworks.

He is known for his habit of listening and analyzing before airing his opinion on a matter. Though, he does not hesitate to correct when one misrepresents the facts. Unlike many public figures, Johari has managed to maintain a relatively low media profile, preferring to let his work speak for itself. However, his influence is widely felt. In aviation circles, he is credited with restoring credibility and technical capacity within the TCAA. In legal corridors, he is already being seen as a reformer with the potential to modernize Tanzania's legal architecture.

A Legacy in the making

Hamza Johari represents a new generation of Tanzanian public servants - professionals who are not only experts in their fields but also capable of navigating the complexities of international diplomacy, public administration, and national governance.

His story is still unfolding, but the trajectory so far points to a legacy of excellence, integrity, and transformation. Whether it was securing Tanzania's skies or now guiding its legal system, Johari continues to prove that with the right leadership, institutions can be strong, efficient, and respected. In an era where trust in public institutions is more critical than ever, the rise of Hamza Johari offers hope and a clear signal that competence and character still matter in the corridors of power.

IN BRIEF: JOHARI COMPETENCIES

- Experience in overseeing compliance, policy formulation, and legal matters in aviation regulation indicates his strong grasp of governance.
- Multilingual and International Exposure – Fluent in Kiswahili, English, Russian, and Ukrainian, Johari’s multilingual skills suggest an ability to engage in international legal matters and negotiations.
- Proven Integrity and Competence – His career trajectory in both the public and private sectors suggests a reputation for professionalism and competence, qualities essential for the role of Attorney General.