

Tanzania's election fraud triggers mass protests with army deployed

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The largest anti-government mobilisations since Tanzania's independence have erupted in the wake of Wednesday's elections. From Dar es Salaam to Arusha, thousands of workers, youth, and the urban poor have taken to the streets to denounce the vote engineered to secure victory for President Samia Suluhu Hassan and the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (Party of the Revolution—CCM).

The vote for president, the 400-seat parliament, and lawmakers of the semi-autonomous Zanzibar archipelago was stage-managed to guarantee Hassan's victory. The government ensured that no genuine opposition could compete. Tundu Lissu, leader of the pro-business CHADEMA (Party for Democracy and Progress) was arrested in April on farcical treason charges. He faces the possibility of a death sentence. The other major challenger, Luhaga Mpina of the ACT-Wazalendo party, was disqualified on legal technicalities.

Hassan's CCM traces its origins to Julius Nyerere's Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), the petty-bourgeois pan-Africanist movement that led the struggle for independence from Britain in 1961. CCM inherited TANU's one-party apparatus and has maintained power ever since.

In the end, only sixteen minor and regionally based parties with no national support were permitted to stand against Hassan. Official results are expected in the following days.

The election has become what many protesters have dubbed "the coronation of Hassan." She came to power initially in 2021 following the sudden death from Covid-19 of Covid-denier President John Magufuli, when she assumed office without an electoral mandate.

In the days leading up to the vote, Hassan unleashed a wave of terror. Over the weekend, dozens were arrested across the country and at least 20 people have been abducted, with 83 abductions confirmed since Hassan assumed power. Humphrey Polepole, a former CCM spokesperson and ambassador to Cuba, disappeared from his home after publicly criticising Hassan. His family discovered blood stains inside his residence.

By Wednesday morning, tanks and armoured vehicles

were patrolling major cities, with heavy deployments around Dar es Salaam, the country's commercial hub and largest metropolis with 8.5 million inhabitants. On the day of the vote, mass anger erupted. According to reports and videos posted on social media, thousands of demonstrators have filled the streets of Kimara and Ubungo neighbourhoods of Dar es Salaam. The working-class districts of Magomeni, Kinondoni, and Tandale saw barricades erected, clashes with the police and tyres burned — a common scene in neighbouring Kenya, but new to Tanzania. A bus and a petrol station were set ablaze. In Mbeya, polling stations were vandalised and in Arusha, the diplomatic hub and one of Tanzania's largest cities, protesters set a police station on fire.

Videos show youth chanting "We want our country!" and "we don't want CCM" as protesters coordinated through the Zello app which transforms smartphones into walkie-talkies.

The military has been deployed in Dar es Salaam, Dodoma—the country's capital, Zanzibar island, and several regional centres. Internet access has been disrupted across the country and social media platforms including X, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram have been blocked as protesters mobilised using hashtags such as #SuluhuMustGo, #MO29, and #NoElection.

By Wednesday evening, Tanzania had been brought to a standstill. Major transport operators cancelled all intercity travel for the first time in the country's history, and ferry routes from Dar es Salaam to Zanzibar were suspended.

Tito Magoti, a human rights activist, reported that at least five people have been killed so far. But a diplomatic source told *Reuters* that the death toll in Dar es Salaam alone may be as high as ten.

Today, the government ordered all public servants to work from home and deployed troops across the capital. The curfew remains in force and state television have announced that schools would close.

The shockwaves of Tanzania's protests have not stopped at the colonial borders carved by imperialism. In the south, at the Kyela crossing in Mbeya Region, protesters from

neighbouring Malawi confronted Tanzanian border security, forcing officials to flee as dozens of youth crossed into Tanzania to join the demonstrations. In the north, Kenyan media reported that security forces blocked groups of young Kenyans at the Namanga crossing who attempted to enter Tanzania in solidarity.

These incidents are deeply significant. Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, backed by US and European imperialism, collaborate to kidnap and extradite opposition figures and activists across their borders. Now workers and youth are beginning to organise cross border opposition. Indeed, the protest is part of a growing wave of youth-led uprisings against the ossified post-independence order that has dominated the African continent. From FRELIMO in Mozambique to the MPLA in Angola, from Paul Biya's 92-year-old autocracy in Cameroon to Morocco's King Mohammed VI throne, to the discredited African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa, once synonymous with national liberation, and the tribalised capitalist factions of Kenya's ruling elite, a new generation is turning against these governments. In Madagascar, protestors ousted the president who fled to France as the military took over.

Decades after independence, millions of young Africans remain excluded from the wealth they create. They face mass unemployment, poverty wages, and the denial of basic rights such as education and healthcare, while being ruled by elites who serve the same capitalist and imperialist interests as their colonial predecessors.

These protests have erupted on the same soil where Julius Nyerere, one of the figures most associated with Pan-Africanism after Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, once sought to chart a "third way" between capitalism and socialism. Nyerere's project of Ujamaa was presented as a model of African socialism, promising equality, collective ownership, and self-reliance. Beneath his rhetoric, however, Ujamaa remained a pro-capitalist programme that sought state-led development based on manoeuvres with imperialism.

Nyerere's insistence that "social classes do not exist" in Africa has been completely refuted. Serving to mask the real social forces at work in newly independent states, he idealised pre-colonial communal traditions: "In our traditional African society we were individuals within a community. We took care of the community, and the community took care of us. We neither needed nor wished to exploit our fellow men. We neither had capitalists nor feudalists."

Today, despite annual growth of over 5 percent, fuelled by foreign investment in mining, energy, and infrastructure, the majority of Tanzanians remain mired in poverty. The country has 43 percent still living below the international poverty line of \$2.15 per day, despite being one of Africa's

top gold producers, with offshore natural gas reserves, and boasting rare minerals like tanzanite, alongside substantial deposits of diamonds, nickel, coal, and uranium. Over 65 percent of the population is employed in agriculture, overwhelmingly in informal or subsistence conditions. Meanwhile, the working class, concentrated in the service, mining, and construction sectors, faces chronic underemployment, low wages, and precarious conditions.

At the other end of society, Tanzania is dominated by oligarchs such as Mohammed Dewji, the CEO of Mohammed Enterprises Tanzania Limited, whose fortune is estimated at \$2.2 billion, and Rostam Aziz, worth around \$700 million. Foreign multinationals extract billions of dollars in profits each year from the country's mines, gas fields, and plantations, while the state receives a pittance in royalties that are then bitterly fought over by rival factions within the CCM.

The main opposition party, CHADEMA, offers no alternative. It represents a faction of the same ruling elite, made up largely of former CCM figures who resent being excluded from the plunder. Its programme is pro-business, calling for cutting corporate tax from 25 percent to between 15 and 20 percent and for creating what it describes as a "conducive environment for investors" in the mining, oil, and gas sectors. CHADEMA's proposed reforms include the privatisation of the energy industry and the drive to make state-owned enterprises more "efficient", a euphemism for selling them off to private capital.

As Trotsky explained in his theory of Permanent Revolution, in all countries the struggle for and defence of democracy cannot be separated from the fight to establish workers' power and the implementation of socialist policies. And second, the struggle for socialism must be conducted on the basis of an international strategy directed toward the global mobilisation of the working class against the world capitalist system.



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