

Hundreds killed protesting Tanzanian election fraud

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Hundreds of protesters are feared dead after Tanzanian security forces launched a savage crackdown on demonstrations against the fraudulent elections of October 29, 2025. In what many are calling a coronation at gunpoint, President Samia Suluhu Hassan of the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), the bourgeois nationalist party that has ruled uninterrupted for 64 years, was declared the winner with 98 percent of the vote on Saturday.

The fraudulent vote unleashed three days of mass demonstrations and violent clashes with police. In major cities including Dar es Salaam, Arusha, Mbeya, Mwanza, Tunduma, and Kahama, hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, have poured into the streets, defying curfews, teargas and live ammunition from security forces.

Demonstrators have torched police stations, destroyed ballot boxes, and set fire to vehicles, homes, and businesses belonging to CCM officials and their wealthy associates. Portraits of President Hassan, once displayed in every public building, have been burned.

The political reckoning has also targeted Tanzania's most prominent artists and celebrities. Diamond Platnumz, the most streamed artist in East and Central Africa and one of the top African artists globally, his protégé Zuchu, one of the region's most streamed female artists, and rapper Bill Nas have all become targets. Protesters have attacked their homes and set fire to their cars and businesses. For years, these artists performed at CCM rallies, praised President Hassan in their songs, and helped to sanitise the regime's image.

The government has responded with savage repression. Opposition party CHADEMA alleges that as many as 800 people have been killed. A diplomatic source told the BBC that deaths could exceed 500. With restrictions to social media, foreign journalists barred from entering and domestic outlets such as *The Citizen* and *Daily News* parroting official CCM statements, the full scale of the bloodshed cannot be confirmed.

On Saturday, Hassan, who had remained silent and whose whereabouts were unclear since election day, made a brief

appearance in the country's capital, Dodoma, to collect the winner's certificate from electoral authorities. Speaking afterwards, she claimed that the result showed Tanzanians had "voted overwhelmingly" for her.

Hassan threatened protestors: "When it comes to the security of Tanzania, there is no debate—we must use all available security avenues to ensure the country remains safe"

She has since vanished from public view, perhaps reflecting on her former counterparts in Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Madagascar, each forced to flee amid mass uprisings.

As of today, it remains unclear whether protests are continuing, as the regime's nationwide curfew and severe restrictions on Internet access have obscured the situation. What is clear is that Hassan's coronation has erupted into a nationwide uprising against the CCM regime and the entire social order it represents.

There is no precedent for protests of this scale in Tanzania's post-independence history. Over the years there has been small, isolated struggles by the Maasai communities resisting eviction from ancestral lands to expand national parks, by miners and villagers exploited by mining corporations, and by workers and youth angered by the theft of natural gas revenues. Never has there been a unified national eruption of class anger.

The main opposition party, the pro-business CHADEMA led by Tundu Lissu, who remains imprisoned on fabricated treason charges, has rejected the election result. "These results have no basis in reality," said Secretary General John Mnyika. CHADEMA does not appear to be directing the current wave of protests. Indeed, its executive council said the party was debating a nationwide protest even as demonstrators had already taken matters into their own hands, enforcing not only protests but an effective national shutdown over the previous three days, with businesses closed and transport paralysed in major cities.

"Very soon, we are going to announce our reaction, which could include national protests," said CHADEMA spokesperson John Kitoka. Kitoka reiterated that the party's

main demand remains for the CCM to hold a new vote under international supervision. “We are calling for the intervention of a credible body to oversee another fresh election,” he said.

CHADEMA may feel compelled to call demonstrations to channel and contain the popular movement, steering it back toward appeals to the CCM. But the party has no intention of destabilising Tanzanian capitalism. Historically, CHADEMA has shown little capacity to mobilise mass action. Its leadership largely consists of former CCM officials and remains oriented toward parliamentary politics.

Above all, it is a pro-capitalist party. Its constitution upholds “property, free enterprise, and the private sector... We believe in a free market, not in a chaotic market.” It declares its aims are “to build and strengthen a free market economy... free enterprise and the private sector,” and “to create an environment for the expansion of the private sector.”

CHADEMA has appealed to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union (AU) to intervene. Both are instruments of imperialist domination across Africa.

The AU’s current chairperson, Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, has already congratulated Hassan on her “victory.” Youssouf served as Djibouti’s Minister of Foreign Affairs overseeing its close ties with the US, France and the Gulf States due to the country’s strategic position at the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. He is a senior member of the People’s Rally for Progress, the party that has ruled the country since independence from France in 1977. Like Hassan, he is part of East Africa’s ruling elite.

SADC’s role is not to defend democracy but to defend capitalist order and the region’s ruling elites against popular revolt. Under the SADC Mutual Defence Pact, the organisation may deploy troops within a member state’s territory to suppress “internal unrest” and reestablish “public order” at the request of that government. In 2017, after the assassination of Lesotho’s army commander and fears of a coup, SADC intervened with troops. In 2021, Mozambique invoked the pact to secure military support against the Islamist insurgency in Cabo Delgado, fuelled by mass poverty.

Presidential spokesperson Jonas Mbambo of neighbouring Malawi, which currently chairs the SADC Organ on Defence and Security Cooperation, said the country is closely monitoring the situation. Landlocked Malawi is feeling the ripple effects of the protests, facing fuel shortages and disrupted trade. The protests have also disrupted the movement of goods to Rwanda, under the three-decade dictatorship of Paul Kagame.

There are growing fears among the ruling classes across

East Africa that they could be next. According to *Africa Intelligence*, Hassan reportedly held separate phone calls with Kenyan President William Ruto and Uganda’s long-time ruler Yoweri Museveni. Ruto last year faced massive Gen Z–led protests against IMF austerity measures that left hundreds dead. Museveni, widely despised after nearly four decades in power, is preparing yet another fraudulent election in January 2026, marked by intimidation and violent repression of the opposition.

The calls are said to have taken place on the evening of Wednesday, as the Tanzanian protests threatened to destabilise the wider region. *Kenyans.co.ke* reported that “the outcome of the phone calls is yet to be fully established, but Suluhu [Hassan] could have probably sought the support of top members of the East African Community in the wake of the post-election violence.”

Although the details remain unclear, prominent figures in both regimes rapidly reacted. In Uganda, General Muhoozi Kainerugaba, Museveni’s son, heir apparent, and Chief of Defence Forces, issued a threat on social media: “I see that the Kenyan virus has been transmitted to Tanzanians. Ugandans should not draw any silly ideas from our neighbours. The security structure here is tight and merciless.”

From Kenya, Prime Cabinet Secretary Musalia Mudavadi condemned Kenyan protesters who had broken into Tanzania through the Namanga border post to support their brothers and sisters in Tanzania. “Respect the laws of other countries,” he admonished. “You may not like them, but respect them... I want to encourage our young people to be cautious.”

The panic gripping East Africa’s ruling circles is well founded. They all preside over societies with some of the world’s youngest populations, facing mass unemployment, hunger, and the absence of any future under capitalism. As the ruling class enriches itself from the misery of millions and enforces austerity through police-state repression, the spectre haunting East Africa’s elites is that a whole new generation is rising that is opposed to the whole post-independence order. The task facing Tanzanian workers and youth is to build their own independent political leadership, armed with a revolutionary and internationalist perspective.



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