

US and European imperialists weaponise “human rights” following Tanzania’s post-election massacre

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The US and European Union (EU) have mounted a cynical “human-rights” campaign against President Samia Suluhu Hassan and her Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) government, exploiting Tanzania’s brutal post—October 29 election crackdown that has reportedly killed thousands. Their real aim is to lever this state violence to pull Tanzania out of China’s orbit amid an imperialist-struggle for control over Africa’s strategic minerals.

On Thursday, the US State Department issued a statement declaring that “recent actions by the Government of Tanzania raise grave concerns about the direction of our bilateral relationship and the reliability of the Tanzanian Government as a partner,” citing “ongoing repression of religious freedom and free speech,” “persistent obstacles to US investment,” and “disturbing violence against civilians” following the elections.

The statement comes weeks after US Senators Jim Risch, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and Jeanne Shaheen urged President Donald Trump to review Washington’s relationship with Tanzania. Both are among the most aggressive anti-China hawks in the US political establishment. Risch has repeatedly proposed legislation aimed at countering China’s Belt and Road Initiative, expanding US military and economic leverage on Africa, and pressuring African governments that deepen ties with Beijing. This year he called Trump to drop Kenya’s non-NATO US ally status after Kenyan President William Ruto visited China.

Last May, during a US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Shaheen explicitly tied Tanzania to the escalating geopolitical struggle with China. She highlighted the US and EU-funded Lobito Corridor which seeks to funnel Central Africa’s minerals westward to Angola’s Atlantic coast. She warned that Washington’s position in Africa is being undermined by Beijing’s competing infrastructure projects, presenting the Chinese-linked transport networks in East Africa in place since the late 1960s as a threat to US strategic and economic interests. “Meanwhile, China has a competing railway project in Tanzania that would send these natural resources East, out to the Indian Ocean,” she stated.

The European Union (EU) has joined the campaign. Last week, the European Parliament voted overwhelmingly to freeze €156 million in development funding to Tanzania and called for the immediate release of CHADEMA’s pro-business leader Tundu Lissu, who was based in Brussels for six years and enjoys close

connections to European officials.

The resolution remains non-binding and there are divisions within the EU. Philippe Van Damme, a former EU ambassador in Africa, countered, “If a regime is ready as we have seen in Tanzania to sacrifice people to stay in power, our [Official Development Assistance] doesn’t have the weight to influence that,” he said.

The crimes of Hassan’s regime, horrific as they are, pale beside the daily atrocities of the imperialist powers. For over two years, they have armed and financed Israel’s genocide in Gaza and they instigated a war against Russia in Ukraine in 2022 that has cost the lives of hundreds of thousands. Within the US, Trump is attempting to install a dictatorship, unleashing Gestapo-style raids on migrants as he conducts extrajudicial drone assassinations in the Caribbean and threatens to invade oil-rich Venezuela. The EU’s “Fortress Europe” immigration regime has transformed the Mediterranean into a mass grave, mostly for Africans.

The imperialist powers have worked for over sixty years with the TANU/CCM regime to plunder the country’s resources, tightening their control through debt, “development assistance,” and mining and energy concessions while showing total indifference to the democratic rights and social conditions of the masses. Their invocation of “human rights” is driven by a new scramble for Africa that has become yet another front of a developing Third World War.

Tanzania is endowed with vast deposits of nickel, cobalt, graphite, uranium, titanium, and rare-earth minerals, alongside major reserves of gold, diamonds, tanzanite, coal, and natural gas. These minerals are essential for lithium-ion batteries, drones, advanced electronics, jet-engine alloys, missile systems, and the broader technological infrastructure underpinning the US and European military industrial complex. Washington’s Department of Defense classifies nickel, cobalt, and graphite as critical to military readiness.

The EU is intensifying its partnership with Tanzania based on the Critical Raw Materials Act, adopted in 2024 to diversify supply chains away from China. Brussels is collaborating with the CCM government to expand geological surveys, map mineral reserves, train artisanal miners for incorporation into formal supply chains, and support investment in graphite and nickel production.

What alarms the US and EU is that China is rapidly

consolidating itself as Tanzania's principal economic partner. Even though Hassan further reopened the economy to Western corporations after her predecessor John Magufuli was denounced by the West for "resource nationalism", Chinese economic influence continues to grow.

China has become Tanzania's largest trading partner by far, with nearly \$9 billion in annual trade, dwarfing the EU's \$2 billion and US's \$0.8 billion trade volumes. China's dominance is driven by its export of affordable goods like cheap machinery, electronics and textiles. The EU, historically a major market for Tanzanian exports like coffee, cashews, cotton, and fish has seen its share fall compared to Asian markets (India, China). The US is a minor export destination.

Throughout the 2000s and early 2010s, Tanzania's mining sector was overwhelmingly dominated by Western firms. More than \$1 billion in foreign mining investment during the IMF-dictated privatisation period of the late 1990s and early 2000s went almost entirely into large gold operations run by Canadian, British, South African and Australian companies. By 2016, Acacia Mining, 63 percent owned by Canada's Barrick, accounted for 58.2 percent of national gold production and generated 37 percent of Tanzania's mineral revenues. AngloGold Ashanti's Geita mine, operating since 2000, remained one of Africa's largest. d

As China's overall Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) rose sharply, however, the landscape began to shift. By 2021 Chinese firms had accumulated \$3.4 billion in FDI stock, surpassing the United Kingdom and representing about 23 percent of total FDI, making China one of the top investors across the economy. In 2011, Tanzania signed a \$3 billion agreement with China Sichuan Hongda for the Mchuchuma coal and Liganga iron ore projects. In 2019 the government announced Chinese financing for a \$100 million mineral smelter at Buzwagi and two gold refineries worth roughly \$500 million. Chinese companies are also positioned in rare-earths through financing and offtake agreements at the Nguala project.

Conversely, new large-scale investment of the 2020s includes the Kabanga nickel project, led by the US-based Lifezone Metals with nearly \$1 billion in planned capital investment, backed by the US International Development Finance Corporation and included in Washington's Minerals Security Partnership.

China has become the largest single source of FDI and a major financier of new mineral processing and infrastructure. But European and North American firms still control most legacy gold mines. The US is arriving late but with significant weight in critical minerals such as nickel.

The economic war now unfolding is shaping the mineral geography of the energy transition, determining whether Africa's central Copperbelt's vast deposits move through a US-EU controlled Atlantic gateway or a China-influenced Indian Ocean corridor. The US and EU are backing the rehabilitation and expansion of the Lobito Corridor to the Atlantic, as an export route for copper, cobalt and nickel that reduces global dependence on Chinese-dominated supply chains. China is seeking to maintain and expand its eastward routes through the TAZARA railway and Dar es Salaam port. China Exim Bank has funded with \$2.15 billion the standard-gauge railway section linking Dar es Salaam to

the interior.

Workers across Africa must oppose both the murderous repression of the Hassan government and the predatory manoeuvres of the imperialist powers. Tanzania's capitalist opposition—CHADEMA and ACT–Wazalendo—offers no alternative. These parties routinely appeal to the "international community" dominated by Washington and Brussels, defend the capitalist system, and fear the independent mobilisation of the working class far more than they fear state violence. Their calls for inquiries, commissions, and electoral law changes serve only to demobilise popular anger.

On Tuesday, youth who played a central role in the three days of mass protests that erupted after the election are calling for nationwide demonstrations coinciding with the country's independence day. Hassan's regime has banned official celebrations and even imposed restrictions at petrol sales at fuel stations to just two litres for tuk tuks and motorbikes, some of the main means youth have mobilised in the last round of protests. She has carried out a wave of disappearances, arrests, and abductions targeting government critics.

The central lesson of the October 29 massacre is that to break the imperialist stranglehold over Tanzania and its CCM stooge requires the independent political mobilisation of the working class and rural poor on a socialist programme that places the country's vast resources at the service of human need, not profit or war.

The decisive task is the construction of a revolutionary socialist leadership in Tanzania, rooted in the working class and armed with the internationalist perspectives forged by the Trotskyist movement in its struggle against Stalinism, social democracy, Nyerere's African Socialism, and every form of pseudo-left nationalism and opportunism, as a section of the International Committee of the Fourth International. These historical are summarised in the WSWS's four-part series, *"The December 9 protest in Tanzania, Nyerere's 'African Socialism' and the struggle for Permanent Revolution."*



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