

Tanzania whitewashes post-election massacre of thousands of protesters

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President Samia Suluhu Hassan and her Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) government has released a report into the October 2025 post-Tanzanian election mass killing of protesters—one of the bloodiest episodes in post-independence African history.

The October 29 election, in which Hassan claimed a one-candidate “victory” with the absurd official result of 97 percent, was a transparent fraud. The main opposition leader Tundu Lissu was detained and accused of treason ahead of the elections. His pro-business Chadema party was barred from contesting.

The response was explosive. Hundreds of thousands, possibly millions, of workers and youth flooded the streets in the largest protests since independence, shattering the myth of Tanzania as a stable “land of peace” promoted by the corporate media and foreign investors. The regime responded with naked terror. Under cover of a five-day internet blackout, security forces unleashed a killing spree, gunning down protesters nationwide.

The report is a whitewash. The commission was chaired by former chief justice Mohamed Chande Othman, like all senior judicial posts appointed from the CCM regime responsible for the massacre.

The report admits that at least 518 people died from “unnatural causes”, 197 by gunfire, and that victims were shot in their homes as well as in the streets, with over 2,000 injured and 833 struck by live rounds. Of the 518, 21 were children. But it dismisses well documented reports of mass graves and large-scale disappearances as unsubstantiated, even as it acknowledges that 245 people are still missing and that 39 families reported seeing the bodies of relatives in morgues before they later disappeared.

The true scale is far greater. A November report by 40 African human rights organisations in Nairobi estimated the death toll at up to 3,000 protesters.

The commission concludes that the security forces exercised restraint and used force proportionately. Despite its claims to have interviewed 60,000 witnesses, the report doesn’t identify any individual or unit as responsible for the killings. Establishing such a chain-of-command would lead directly to Hassan.

Without presenting a shred of evidence, the report attributed the violence to “trained individuals” and “coordinated actors.” It claims that “there were people roaming around in various places... inciting and recruiting others to participate in violence during and after the election”.

This is a well-worn pattern employed by regimes across the region, including that of William Ruto in Kenya following the massacres of anti-austerity protests in 2024 and 2025, and Yoweri Museveni during recent elections in Uganda.

These stooges of imperialism, presiding over capitalist regimes carved out on the colonial boundaries, routinely invoke shadowy external forces to justify their repression, rather than acknowledge the real driving forces: soaring living costs, austerity measures, and police state violence, pushing workers and youth into struggle.

Speaking after receiving the report, Hassan declared that the events were a “tragedy” that “shook our nation”. This gave way to an open defence of repression. She insisted that the security forces had acted to prevent the country from descending into “anarchy,” and claimed that “all the violence was planned, coordinated, financed and executed by people who were trained and given equipment for committing crimes.” The aim of the protests was “to create a leadership vacuum” and render the country “ungovernable.”

Her insistence that those responsible “will be held accountable,” coupled with the announcement of a new

investigative body to target “looters,” “criminals,” and those accused of causing unrest, makes clear that the regime intends to use the report to intensify repression.

The response of the main bourgeois opposition parties has been limited to appeals to the United Nations, African Union and Southern African Development Community to take over “independent” investigations. These are institutions that represent the collective interests of imperialism and the African ruling classes, that have endorsed Hassan’s electoral fraud.

Both Chadema and ACT–Wazalendo articulate the interests of disgruntled sections of the bourgeoisie and upper middle class excluded from the spoils of power by CCM. They fear above all the working class, which threatens not only the CCM regime but the entire social order upon which their own privileges depend.

During the October protests and its aftermath, their role was to channel anger towards pressuring the CCM regime to adopt a more “law-abiding” posture, to compensate victims of its repression, and to appeal to the imperialist-dominated “international community” for intervention. In this way, they sought to systemically contain the mass movement of workers and youth within the safe channels of bourgeois politics.

The report’s release has been met with deafening silence from Washington and Brussels, whose sole concern is Tanzania’s growing importance within the global scramble for resources. The country possesses vast deposits of nickel, graphite, rare earths, and other critical minerals essential for electric vehicle batteries, advanced electronics, and military technologies. US-backed ventures, including major nickel and liquefied natural gas projects, are moving forward, while the European Union has intensified cooperation under its Critical Raw Materials strategy to secure alternative supply chains.

These investments are central to the economic and military interests of the imperialist powers. Maintaining access to these resources and countering the expanding influence of China, which has become Tanzania’s largest trading partner and a major investor in infrastructure and mining, is their overriding aim.

The US State Department and the European Parliament both initially issued expressions of “concern” during the massacres, coupled with appeals

for restraint. Their invocation of “democracy” and “human rights” in the aftermath served as leverage against the CCM’s relations with China and to extract further economic concessions. However, imperialist policy-making circles understand that criticisms must be heavily circumscribed to avoid the risk of driving Tanzania deeper into Beijing’s orbit.

For the Tanzanian masses, the central issues remain unemployment, poverty, and repression. The October protests expressed a deep social crisis. The essential lesson is that the struggle for democratic rights is inseparable from the fight against capitalism and imperialism, and cannot be entrusted to the state, the bourgeois opposition, or the imperialist power now waging war on Iran.

What is required is the united independent political mobilisation workers, youth, and the rural masses in a struggle that must extend beyond the colonial boundaries imposed by imperialism. This must be based on a programme linking immediate democratic demands, including accountability for the killings, the release of political prisoners, and the restoration of democratic rights, to the broader objective of socialist transformation: the expropriation of the ruling elite, democratic control over the region’s vast resources, and their utilisation for human need rather than profit, as part of the fight for the United Socialist States of Africa.

Such a perspective requires the construction of a revolutionary socialist leadership in Tanzania, rooted in the working class and armed with the internationalist programme of Trotskyism, forged in struggle against Stalinism, social democracy, and all forms of petty bourgeois nationalism, including Julius Nyerere’s “African Socialism.” These historical lessons of the International Committee of the Fourth International are documented in “The December 9 protest in Tanzania, Nyerere’s ‘African Socialism’ and the struggle for Permanent Revolution” and “Maoism offered as a bogus alternative to ‘African Socialism’ and Pan-Africanism”.



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