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# Tanzania's October 2025 Presidential Election: Challenges and Possible Scenarios



Author:



**Ahmed Gamal El-Sayyad**

Researcher in Political Science

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## Introduction

As its next presidential election approaches, Tanzania is witnessing a period of political turmoil amid widespread debate over the future of its democratic process. Although the initial years of President Samia Suluhu Hassan's rule brought a series of political reforms, recent developments in the pre-election period—characterized by attempts to exclude and restrict the

sition—have revived concerns about a democratic decline in favor of the continued dominance of the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party. This research paper examines the key features of Tanzania's political landscape, the challenges facing the upcoming election, and the most likely scenarios for its outcome and their impact on the country's future political stability.

## Executive Summary

Tanzania faces a complex political situation as it heads toward its presidential election. The ruling CCM party is clinging to power through exclusionary tactics while confronting a fragmented opposition that has yet to present a strong, viable alternative. This dynamic makes the

upcoming election appear more like a formality to cement the CCM's continued rule than a genuine step toward building a more stable and democratic system. This state of affairs places the future of Tanzania's political life and its democratic process at considerable risk.



# 1. The Political Landscape in Pre-Election Tanzania

The Tanzanian political scene is characterized by both tension and competition as the October 2025 presidential election approaches. This is defined by the efforts of the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) to maintain its long-held grip on power and the attempts by opposition parties to build a popular base to challenge its hegemony.

Since the adoption of a multi-party system in 1995, Tanzania has held six elections, all of which have been won by the CCM, making it one of Africa's longest-ruling post-independence political parties. This dominance is rooted in its legacy as the party of revolution and state-building, similar to liberation parties in other African nations like Angola, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique. However, this long tenure has been maintained through an approach that often includes intimidation and the manipulation of electoral systems, a practice that can be described as electoral authoritarianism.

A period of political détente followed the death of President John Magufuli in 2021 and the ascent of his vice president, Samia Suluhu Hassan. Magufuli's tenure was marked by a strict consolidation of the ruling party's power through political violence and the suppression of the opposition, exemplified by the 2017 assassination attempt on opposition leader Tundu Lissu. In contrast, President Hassan initially introduced reforms aimed at creating a more moderate political environment. In January 2023, she lifted a ban on opposition party gatherings, released imprisoned opposition leaders, eased restrictions on the media, and removed hardline officials from Magufuli's era. These measures were widely praised both locally and internationally, enhancing Tanzania's standing as one of East Africa's more stable countries. However, the period leading up to the 2025 election has witnessed a return to the repressive

tactics of the Magufuli era. In August 2024, 500 supporters of the main opposition party, CHADEMA, were arrested, including prominent leaders like Tundu Lissu and Freeman Mbowe. This crackdown followed the November 2024 local elections, in which opposition parties protested the mass disqualification of their candidates. The CCM ultimately won nearly 99% of the seats, an outcome that strains credibility. In a move to consolidate her electoral base and avoid a split within the ruling party, President Hassan has also brought back some of the hardline figures she had previously sidelined. This shift has culminated in the exclusion of CHADEMA from the upcoming presidential election.

The National Electoral Commission cited the party's refusal to sign a code of conduct document as the reason for its disqualification, a decision that also banned the party from political activities until 2030. CHADEMA's refusal to sign stemmed from its objections to the current electoral process and its calls for fundamental reforms, including an overhaul of the electoral commission, under the slogan "No reforms, no elections."

Consequently, the Chadema party and its leader, Lissu, refused to sign the alleged code of conduct, which led to accusations that the opposition party was obstructing the elections. The matter ended, as we mentioned earlier, with the Chadema party being banned from participating in the elections and its activities being banned until 2030, and its leader, Tandou Lissu, being arrested and brought to trial.

The decision to exclude the Chadema party from the elections raises several questions not only about the integrity and credibility of the upcoming presidential elections, but also about the orientations of the political system in Tanzania.

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1 Joseph Siegle and Hany Wahila, Tanzania: A Battle for the New Normal of Tanzanian Politics, Africa Center For Strategic Studies, Accessed on 18/8/2025.  
<https://shorturl.at/mmSnY>

2 Joseph Siegle and Hany Wahila, Tanzania: A Battle for the New Normal of Tanzanian Politics, IBID.

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3 Jessica Rawnsley, Tanzania's main opposition party banned from election, BBC, Accessed on 18/8/2025.  
<https://shorturl.at/sAm52>

The restrictive measures and the exclusion of one of the most important opposition parties from participating in the presidential elections is a worrying shift in Tanzania, which witnessed the beginnings of political reforms with the rise of Samia Suluhu as president of the country, succeeding Magufuli. Dodoma witnessed several measures that gave hope that Tanzania was on the right path towards establishing a more open and democratic political system. As previously mentioned, her lifting of the ban on the media, lifting the ban on opposition party rallies and releasing their detained leaders were measures that would put Tanzania on the path to building a more stable and just democratic system. However, the recent developments prior to the elections represent a major setback for the reforms undertaken by Samia Suluhu at the beginning of her term, bringing to mind the period of former President Magufuli, during which Tanzania witnessed several repressive and violent measures in order to consolidate his party's rule in power, which makes us one of the most prominent component of the political scene in Dodoma today is the dominance of the Chama Cha Mapinduzi party (CCM) To rule Tanzania, in addition to working to exclude the opposition from the elections, in order to support the ruling party's position in the upcoming elections.

Despite the exclusion of the Chadema party, one of the largest opposition parties, the political arena is witnessing several candidates for the presidential elections in Tanzania. At the forefront of these candidates is Samia Suluhu, a candidate for the Chama Cha Mapinduzi party (CCM) She called on her party members to unite their ranks and avoid any disagreements in order to ensure victory in the upcoming elections. In addition to several parties that were able to collect nomination forms for the elections, such as the National Alliance for Reconstruction (NRA) Which nominated Hassan Kasabya as the presidential candidate and Hassan's ally as the vice presidential candidate, in addition to the

African Farmers Alliance Party (AAFP) Which will nominate Kongi Nogambari Mwirow as his presidential candidate, and Abdullahi Juma as his vice president, and the United People's Democratic Party (UPDP) The Chama Cha Makeni Party nominated Koster Kibonde as its presidential candidate and Izza Haji Suleiman as its vice-president. The National League for Democracy (NLD) nominated Dwiyo Hassan Dwiyo for president and Chusiko Khatib Mohamed as his vice-president.

In addition to the establishment of the party ACT-Wazalendo is the left-leaning opposition party, nominating Luhaga Mbina as its presidential candidate, and Fatima Abdul Habib as his deputy. It is worth noting that Luhaga Mbina split from the ranks of the Chama Cha Mapinduzi party.

From the above, it becomes clear that the most prominent features of the Tanzanian political scene are summarized by the Chama Cha Mapinduzi party's continued efforts to continue ruling Tanzania. To achieve this goal, Samia Suluhu has returned to Magufuli's measures, which threaten the democratic process in Dodoma, such as restricting some opposition parties that may pose a threat to the ruling party in the upcoming elections. Accordingly, the Chadema party was excluded and its activities were banned, and its leader, Tundu Lissu, was arrested and brought to trial. In addition, the media was restricted, and several other repressive practices were undertaken.

In addition to the presence of more than one candidate in the upcoming elections, which should provide Tanzanian citizens with other alternatives to the ruling party and its candidate, Samia Suluhu, but the repressive practices practiced by the party ( CCM )His exclusion of some opposition figures raises serious doubts about the integrity and credibility of the upcoming presidential elections, a serious challenge for Tanzania, which has shown signs of democratic renewal in recent years.

4 The Citizen, Samia urges CCM unity ahead of 2025 polls, Accessed on 8/19/2025.  
<https://shorturl.at/QYWcx>

5 The Chanzo, Six Collect Nomination Forms for Tanzania's 2025 Presidential Election; Eight More Expected, Accessed on 8/19/2025.  
<https://shorturl.at/LARDs>

6 The Chanzo, ACT Wazalendo Endorses Luhaga Mpina as Presidential Candidate for 2025 Election, Accessed on 8/19/2025.  
<https://shorturl.at/UhlmJ>





## 2. Key Challenges Facing the 2025 Election

Tanzania's presidential election faces several challenges that threaten its credibility and raise questions about the future of its democratic system.

- **Authoritarian Rule and Limited Political Participation:**

The ruling CCM has been in power for decades and has demonstrated its willingness to deal harshly with any party that threatens its dominance, as seen with the exclusion of CHADEMA. This undermines voter confidence in the integrity of the electoral process and is likely to lead to lower turnout.

- **Suppression of Opposition and Erosion of Political Alternatives:**

The exclusion of CHADEMA from the election weakens genuine political competition. Without a strong challenger, the election risks becoming a mere formality rather than a democratic exercise that determines the nation's future. This reinforces public cynicism about the value of participating. A comparison of voter turnout in

the 2015 and 2020 elections shows a significant decline from 67.3% to 50.7%, a trend largely attributed to a loss of faith in the electoral process.

- **Youth Disengagement from Political Life:**

Young people between the ages of 15 and 35 constitute approximately 34.5% of Tanzania's population. However, a large segment of Tanzanian youth has become disengaged from traditional political participation. While many are politically active on digital platforms, their participation is often met with repressive measures, including warnings against the use of VPNs, fines for digital content creators, and amendments to cyber-crime laws that expand the definition of "false information" to include criticism of the state. Civil society has documented 17 abductions of young people for political motives between 2022 and 2024. A 2023 Afrobarometer survey found that only 29% of young Tanzanians believe that elections are a true expression of the popular will, a 14-point drop from 2018. This reflects a deep-seated reluctance to participate in a political system they view as both fruitless and unsafe.

### 3. Possible Scenarios for the October 2025 Election

Given the current political climate of restrictions on the opposition and the CCM's determination to maintain its hold on power, the upcoming election presents a critical crossroads for Tanzania.

#### **Scenario 1: President Hassan Wins, and the CCM's Dominance Continues (Most Likely)**

The CCM has taken several measures to undermine the opposition, most notably the exclusion of CHADEMA. With no strong, unified political alternative that can capture the aspirations of the Tanzanian people, the victory of Samia Suluhu Hassan is the most probable outcome. The CCM is one of the longest-serving ruling parties in

Africa, having won all six multi-party elections, making its continuation in power the most realistic scenario.

#### **Scenario 2: A New Political Actor Breaks the Ruling Party's Hegemony (Unlikely but Possible)**

While unlikely, the success of an opposition party or coalition should not be entirely dismissed. Such an outcome would depend on the ability of a political actor to galvanize the Tanzanian public by presenting a convincing alternative capable of addressing the country's political and economic challenges. This actor could be a single party or an alliance of opposition forces. However, at present, there are no clear indications that such







## Conclusion

**T**he October 2025 election in Tanzania is more than just a routine electoral event; it is a true test of the political system's ability to balance the demands of stability with a commitment to democratic principles. If the ruling party continues its exclusionary and undemocratic practices, it will likely lead to a further decline in public trust and political participation, especially among the youth. Conversely, if more space is provided for genuine pluralism, Tanzania could move toward a more stable democratic path. This election is a pivotal moment that will determine the country's future for years to come.