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Tanzania

Tanzania: When bullets replace ballots

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The East African country of Tanzania has been going through the most serious political crisis in its history since gaining independence in 1961, following the disputed re-election of Samia Suluhu Hassan as president. There is now talk of thousands of deaths, an estimate corroborated by diplomatic sources.

Politics of terror

As in many other countries on the continent, the two main oppositionists were excluded from the electoral process. Tundu Lissu, leader of the Chadema party, was prevented from running for legal reasons, while Luhaga Mpina, leader of the ACT-Wazalendo party, is awaiting trial in prison on charges of treason — an offence that does not allow for bail.

In all the major cities of the country, massive demonstrations took place to denounce this sham election. The police have repeatedly fired live ammunition. The first videos released after the internet reopened show streets littered with corpses. The police are trying to erase this evidence by sending text messages threatening anyone who broadcasts testimonies about this bloodbath.

After the elections, the abuses continued. Security teams went at night to the homes of citizens suspected of having taken sides against the president in order to execute them. Even some important figures of the ruling party, the CCM, such as Humphrey Polepole, disappeared after issuing criticisms of the current political line.

An isolated regime

Samia Suluhu Hassan, initially vice president, came to power after the sudden death of president John Magufuli. The early days of her mandate were marked by a relative openness of the public space. But very quickly, authoritarian and then openly dictatorial practices took over, at a time when opposition parties, notably Chadema, were gaining popularity.

The ferocity of the repression illustrates the fragility of the Hassan regime, whose only real support remains, so far, the army and the police forces. Her predecessor, although also undemocratic, had never reached such a level of coercion. Magufuli also retained a certain social base, because of his anti-imperialist rhetoric and sovereignist economic policy in the face of British and Canadian multinationals in the mining sector. His measures against corruption and budget waste also won him some popular sympathy.

Samia Suluhu Hassan, on the other hand, is pursuing a neoliberal economic policy aimed at improving the “business climate” and attracting foreign investors by favouring the private sector. Her brutal authoritarianism earned her the nickname “Idi Amin Mama” on the street, in reference to Idi Amin Dada, the bloodthirsty Ugandan dictator of the 1970s. This shows the popularity of this president, officially elected with... 98% of the votes.

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Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [l'Anticapitaliste](#).

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