



BRIEFING PAPER

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Tanzania: 2020 presidential election

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Summary

A general election was held on mainland Tanzania and the semi-autonomous Zanzibar on Wednesday 28 October 2020. As well as electing a president and vice-president, the electorate also voted for members of the National Assembly.

President John Magufuli was declared the winner by election authorities, securing a second (and final) five-year term on a landslide 84 per cent of votes.

There has been criticism of the way in which the election was conducted and the two main opposition parties have suggested the poll was fraudulent and have demanded a rerun.

1. Background

Elections are held every five years using the first-past-the-post system to determine the composition of the National Legislature, with a separate ballot directly electing the president. The constitution allows presidential candidates to stand for re-election only once, limiting the number of terms they can serve to two. If a presidential candidate comes from the mainland in Tanzania, then his running mate – the vice-presidential candidate – must come from Zanzibar, and vice versa.¹

Tanzania has held democratic elections since it was a one-party state in the early 1990s, with the Chama Cha Mapinduzi party in power for over half a century.²

Since John Magufuli became president in 2015 – running on a ticket to end corruption – there has been a severe crackdown on opposition political parties and civil rights, with the Government jailing rival politicians, pop stars and journalists and restricting criticism of the Government. Threats have been made to the country's LGBTQ citizens and teenage mothers have been stopped from going back to school.³

In a statement released on 21 July 2020, Tanzania's National Electoral Commission set 28 October as the election date, with the campaign running from 26 August.

¹ [Tanzania: Electoral system](#), African Democracy Encyclopaedia Project [accessed 3 November 2020]

² [Tanzania](#), Freedom House: Freedom in the World 2020 [accessed 6 November 2020]

³ ['Tanzania Was East Africa's Strongest Democracy. Then Came 'The Bulldozer''](#), *The Atlantic*, 15 May 2019

2. 2020 presidential election

2.1 Political parties

The major political parties in Tanzania are the ruling [Chama Cha Mapinduzi](#) (CCM) party, the main opposition [Chadema](#) party, the [ACT-Wazalendo](#) party and the [Civic United Front](#) party.

Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM)

Chama Cha Mapinduzi (Party of the Revolution) was established in 1977, following the merger of the Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP) and the Tanzania African National Union (TANU).

CCM and its predecessor, TANU, have ruled Tanzania uninterruptedly since independence in 1961. From its founding in 1977 until 1992, CCM was the only political party legally permitted in the country. And, since the creation of a multi-party system in 1992, CCM has won all six general elections.

Historically a left-wing champion of African socialism, the party has since moved to a more centre-left position.

The CCM's 2020-25 election manifesto covered 303 pages and identified key areas aimed at bringing both political and socio-economic changes. Its policies were divided into several categories, including: a people-centred economic revolution; science and technology; peace and security; good governance and justice; international relations; and implementation of crucial issues in Zanzibar. The manifesto also promised the creation of eight million new jobs.⁴

Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (Chadema)

Chadema (Party for Democracy and Progress) was founded in 1992, when the multi-party system was created in the country. Chadema is a centre-right party and has increased its share of the vote in every election.

Chadema's manifesto committed to engaging the private sector to increase employment opportunities and to improve roads, infrastructure, markets, energy and raw material processing industries. Tanzanians would also be empowered to own land and would have access to free education. Free healthcare would be provided for people with disabilities, children and the elderly, and for maternity care.

Chadema has committed to transforming the leadership in Tanzania and consolidating the principles of integrity, creativity and patriotism. Chadema also promised to change the constitution to introduce federalism to decentralise power and allow regions to directly determine how they are governed.⁵

⁴ ['CCM Manifesto Eyes Exponential Growth'](#), MarketWatch press release, 31 August 2020

⁵ [Framing democracy – media coverage of Tanzania's 2020 presidential elections: a focus on opposition candidate Tundu Lissu](#), Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Media Programme [accessed 17 November 2020]

Alliance for Change and Transparency (ACT-Wazalendo)

ACT-Wazalendo is a left-wing party and new to the political scene, having been founded in 2014.

In its 2020 election manifesto – under the slogan “Better life with enjoyment for all citizens” – the party promised job creation, improved health care, better education and an “acceptable” union between Zanzibar and mainland Tanzania.

Other key policies included liberalising media freedom, improving the judiciary and infrastructures, and protecting the environment.

There were additional policies to specifically benefit Zanzibaris.⁶

Civic United Front (CUF)

The CUF (Party of Citizens) is a liberal party founded in 1992, following a merger of two existing movements: Kamahuru, a Zanzibar opposition party; and the Civic Movement, a human rights organisation based on the mainland.

The party commands substantial support in Zanzibar and Pemba, for which it demands increased autonomy.⁷

2.2 Candidates

The 2015 election was won by John Magufuli of the [Chama Cha Mapinduzi](#) (CCM) party, who stood again in the 2020 election and was one of fifteen candidates announced by the electoral commission. Magufuli’s main opponents were Tundu Lissu for the opposition [Chadema](#) party, former Foreign Minister Bernard Membe for the [ACT-Wazalendo](#) party, and economist and politician Ibrahim Lipumba for the [Civic United Front](#) party.⁸

John Magufuli

John Magufuli was born in Chato, Tanzania on 29 October 1959. He is married to Janet, a primary school teacher, and they have three children.

Dr Magufuli graduated from the University of Dar es Salaam in 1988 with a degree in Chemistry and Mathematics and obtained a Master’s degree in the same fields from the same university and also the University of Salford in the UK. He was awarded his Doctorate in Chemistry from the University of Dar es Salaam in 2009.

Magufuli first joined the Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party in 1977 and was elected MP for Biharamulo East in 1995. Before then he taught chemistry and mathematics at a secondary school and also worked as

⁶ [‘Tanzania: Act Launches Manifesto, Pledges Zanzibar Economy Rise’](#), *Tanzanian Daily News*, 5 October 2020

⁷ [Civic United Front \(CUF\) \(Tanzania\)](#), Europa World online, Routledge. [Retrieved 17 November 2020]

⁸ [‘Tanzania presidential election: Who are the main candidates?’](#), *Al Jazeera*, 26 October 2020

an industrial chemist. After becoming a Member of Parliament in 1995, Magufuli held several ministerial positions before running for the presidency in 2015. He won the election and was sworn in as President on 5 November 2015.

Magufuli soon earned a reputation for his zero tolerance approach to corruption and excessive government spending. Nicknamed "The Bulldozer", he dismissed several top government officials in the weeks after his election and later named a streamlined cabinet.

Since becoming president in 2015, Magufuli's Government has become more authoritarian and has introduced regulations that severely restrict social media and criminalises the publication of data not endorsed by the Government.⁹

He won re-election in October 2020 and was sworn in for his second and final five-term on 5 November 2020.

Tundu Lissu

Tundu Lissu was born on 20 January 1968 and is married to Alicia Magabe. They have two sons, Agostino and Edward.

A lawyer by training, Lissu first entered politics in 2010, when he was elected MP for Singida East constituency.

On 7 September 2017 he was shot and seriously injured by unknown assailants in an attack near his home in Dodoma. In January 2018 he travelled to Belgium to undergo further hospital treatment. He was discharged from the University Hospital Leuven in Brussels on 7 August 2018.

On 28 June 2019 Lissu lost his parliamentary seat due to absenteeism. Later that year he was elected national vice chairman (Mainland) of the Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (Chadema) party and, on 8 June 2020, declared his intention to run for the Tanzanian presidency.

He returned to Tanzania from Belgium on 27 July 2020.

Bernard Membe

Bernard Membe was born on 9 November 1953 in Tanzania's Lindi region and is married to Dorcas. He studied Politics and the University of Dar es Salaam and International Relations at John Hopkins University in the US.

Before entering politics, Membe was appointed adviser to the Tanzanian High Commissioner in Ottawa, Canada, in 1992 and served until 2000.

First elected as an MP in 2000 for the Mtama constituency as a member of the Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party, Membe held several ministerial positions during his time in parliament, including posts in Home Affairs and Foreign Affairs.

⁹ ['Tanzania Was East Africa's Strongest Democracy. Then Came 'The Bulldozer'.', *The Atlantic*, 15 May 2019](#)

He signalled his intention to contest the 2015 presidential election, but was not selected as a candidate by the CCM party. The party expelled him on 28 February 2020 for “violating the party’s ethics and constitution”¹⁰, but he claimed his expulsion was because he intended to seek the party’s ticket for the presidential election in October 2020.

On 16 July Membe joined the Alliance for Change and Transparency (ACT-Wazalendo) party and was selected as the party’s presidential candidate on 5 August.

The party leadership later endorsed the candidacy of Tundu Lissu, but Membe continued to run for the presidency.

Ibrahim Lipumba

Ibrahim Lipumba was born in Ilongulu in rural Tanzania on 6 June 1952 and graduated from the University of Dar es Salaam with both a Bachelor’s and a Master’s degree in Economics. He later gained his doctorate in Economics from Stanford University in the US.

Before entering politics, Prof. Lipumba held several academic positions and was a consultant to various major international organisations, including the World Bank.¹¹

Lipumba first became chairman of the Civic United Front (CUF) party in 1995 and served for 20 years until resigning on 5 August 2015. He was re-elected party chair in March 2019 and 2020 was his fifth time on the ballot for the Tanzanian presidency.

2.3 Election campaign

The various political parties launched their manifestos early in the campaign.

Unlike recent elections in other countries, the Covid-19 pandemic was not at the forefront of the election campaign.

When the first Covid-19 cases were reported in Tanzania, President Magufuli had encouraged people to attend churches and mosques to pray. He dismissed social distancing and the wearing of masks and questioned the efficacy of testing, after sending various animals and fruit to be checked for the virus and declaring a papaya, a quail and a goat had all tested positive.¹²

On 29 April Magufuli declared the country “coronavirus-free”, thanks to the grace of God, and Tanzania has not reported any Covid-19 data since this date.¹³

¹⁰ ‘Biography: Bernard Kamilius Membe’, *BBC Monitoring – Tanzania*, 2 November 2020

¹¹ [Prof. Ibrahim Haruna Lipumba](#), National Endowment for Democracy [accessed 10 November 2020]

¹² ‘Tanzania President John Magufuli: The man who declared victory over coronavirus’, *BBC News Online*, 2 November 2020

¹³ ‘Coronavirus: John Magufuli declares Tanzania free of Covid-19’, *BBC News Online*, 8 June 2020

During the election campaign there were numerous attempts by the ruling party to derail and silence the opposition, with reports of intimidation and harassment in both mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar.

On 2 October the National Electoral Commission (NEC) ethics committee suspended the presidential candidate of the Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (Chadema), Tundu Lissu, from campaigning for seven days for allegedly violating election rules during his campaign rallies. According to the committee, Lissu claimed that President Magufuli had convened a meeting with election returning officers in order to sabotage the forthcoming election.

As polling day neared, international campaign groups including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and Reporters Without Borders claimed repression of the opposition and activist groups had increased. Deprose Muchena, Amnesty's director for East and Southern Africa, said:

The use of the law to systemically and deliberately clamp down on people's inalienable human rights, especially in an election season, is an extremely worrying and unhealthy sign for a country positioning itself for greater growth and development.¹⁴

Furthermore, the media faced additional restrictions, with rules introduced in August requiring foreign journalists to be chaperoned on assignments by a government official, and Tanzanian broadcasters having to seek permission to air content produced by foreign media.

Internet restrictions – including the blocking of many social media and messaging platforms – were put in place in the days leading to the poll and election-related content was restricted. Pre-ticking of ballots was reported and political agents acting for opposition parties were restricted in accessing polling stations, though the national electoral commission denied any wrongdoing.

On the eve of the election, opposition leaders accused police of shooting dead nine people in protests against alleged election-rigging in Zanzibar. Trucks loaded with soldiers, police and a militia linked to the ruling CCM were seen driving throughout Zanzibar City, while witnesses also described security forces beating civilians.¹⁵

The 2020 election is Tanzania's fifth since the reintroduction of the multiparty system in 1992 and comes against a background of strong rulers in Africa seeking to hold on to power through managing electoral processes and constitutional change.

Ringisai Chikohomero, of the Institute for Security Studies in Pretoria, commented:

The upcoming elections will, it seems, be another disheartening exercise lacking in the credibility needed to develop a strong democracy. Tanzania is not alone among African countries whose electoral processes are a sham. Despite this, neither the Southern

¹⁴ [Tanzania: Laws weaponized to undermine political and civil freedoms ahead of elections](#), Amnesty International, 12 October 2020

¹⁵ ['Tanzanian opposition accuses police of killing nine during protests'](#), *the Guardian*, 27 October 2020

African Development Community nor the African Union have done enough to restore the democratic deficit on the continent.¹⁶

2.4 Election results

Tanzania's National Electoral Commission published provisional election results on 30 October. These showed President Magufuli securing a second term in office with a landslide victory.

Candidate	Party	No. of valid votes ^(a)	% of valid votes
Dr John Magufuli	Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM)	12,516,252	84.40
Tundu Lissu	Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (Chadema)	1,933,271	13.04
Bernard Membe	Alliance for Change and Transparency (ACT-Wazalendo)	81,129	0.55
Leopold Mahona	National Reconstruction Alliance (NRA)	80,787	0.54
Prof. Ibrahim Lipumba	Civic United Front (CUF)	72,885	0.49
John Shibuda	African Democratic Alliance (ADA-TADEA)	33,086	0.22
Hashim Rungwe	Chama cha Ukombozi wa Umma (Chaumma)	32,878	0.22
Others ^(b)		79,907	0.54
Total		14,830,195	100.00

^(a) Excluding 261,755 invalid votes

^(b) Eight other candidates

Source: [President \(Tanzania\)](#), Europa World online, Routledge. [Retrieved 13 November 2020]

The two main opposition parties – Chadema and ACT-Wazalendo – denounced the election as being fraudulent and demanded fresh elections.

In the meantime, Freeman Mbowe, Chairman of Chadema, called for “continuous, peaceful, countrywide demonstrations until our demands are met” and the party’s presidential candidate, Tundu Lissu, dismissed the elections, saying it “was not an election by both Tanzanian and international laws. It was just a gang of people who have just decided to misuse state machinery to cling to power.”¹⁷

Freeman Mbowe was later detained by police and Tundu Lissu was arrested outside a building housing Western embassies in Dar es Salaam, where he had sought protection. Lissu was subsequently released and a third opposition figure, Zitto Kabwe, went into hiding.¹⁸

2.5 International reaction

Following the election, the UK Government issued a statement expressing concern at the manner in which the election was conducted amidst widespread allegations of interference. James Duddridge, Minister for Africa, also called for a transparent investigation by the

¹⁶ [Tanzania elections set to widen Africa’s democratic deficit](#), Institute for Security Studies, 21 October 2020

¹⁷ [‘Tanzania elections: Main opposition parties demand fresh vote’](#), BBC News Online, 31 October 2020

¹⁸ [‘Tanzanian government cracks down on opposition after disputed election’](#), The Guardian, 2 November 2020

authorities into reported irregularities and urged restraint to ensure a peaceful resolution of tensions.¹⁹

A US Department of State spokesperson echoed these comments and said the US Government would “consider actions including visa restrictions, as appropriate, to hold accountable those found to be responsible for human rights abuses and interference in the election process”.²⁰

Wang Wenbin, China’s Foreign Ministry spokesperson, took a different approach when asked if China had any comment on President Magufuli’s victory:

China extends congratulations to President Magufuli on winning another term. We believe that under his leadership, Tanzania will make greater progress in national development. We look forward to enhancing cooperation with the new Tanzanian government to bring bilateral relations to a new height.²¹

¹⁹ [Presidential elections in Tanzania: UK statement](#), Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, 1 November 2020

²⁰ [Widespread Irregularities Observed during the Tanzanian Elections](#), US Department of State, 2 November 2020

²¹ [Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin's Remarks on Magufuli's Election as Tanzanian President](#), Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the United Kingdom, 31 October 2020

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