

TANZANIA
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Bomb Attack on Opposition Party Casts Shadow over Local Elections in Tanzania

June 25th, 2013

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A bomb attack has once again shaken Arusha, the tourism hub in Northern Tanzania, on June 15th. It occurred during a campaign event on the eve of countrywide by-elections, during which 26 local mandates of local and community representatives were due to be filled, and it was directed against CHADEMA, the largest Tanzanian opposition party. In the attack, four people were killed, three of whom were children. This tragic event is the culmination point in what eye-witnesses describe as a campaign characterised by massive attempts to intimidate voters, and it marks just one in a series of incidents caused by both politically and religiously motivated violence.

After the attack, the Arusha elections were postponed to June 30th, 2013. In Arusha, which is perceived to be a CHADEMA (Swahili for *Party for Democracy and Progress*) stronghold, four mandates need to be filled. These are fiercely contested by both the opposition and by the governing party CCM (*Party of the Revolution* in Swahili) because the outcome of the elections in Tanzania's second largest city is of great symbolic importance for the balance of political power at a national level. The most recent attack occurred only six weeks after a catholic service was bombed in Arusha on May 5th.

Just after 6 p.m. on Saturday June 15th, during CHADEMA'S closing rally, an explosive device was thrown into the crowd. It exploded in the immediate vicinity of the podium, from which, just moments before,

CHADEMA party leader Freeman Mbowe had concluded his address.

Local and national political leaders were seated close to the podium, which was actually the roof of a delivery van. However, the explosive failed to reach its alleged targets: both Freeman Mbowe and Godbless Lema, a national MP who is highly popular with the Arusha population, remained unharmed. The full force of the explosion did hit the people seated in the front rows though, many of whom were children. Three children, and Judith Moshi, the head of the CHADEMA'S women's association in Arusha, were killed, and more than 60 people, including many party activists, were injured, some of them severely.

Haphazard Police Operation

Eyewitnesses describe the response of the police present at the scene to protect the rally as uncoordinated and haphazard. Officers shot into the air and, while participants ran away in a panic, threw tear gas canisters at the crowd, obviously in gross misjudgement of the situation. The rally attendees started their own methods of rescue. As there weren't any ambulances there, CHADEMA members put their own cars at the disposal of those who needed to transport the severely injured to nearby hospitals. That same night, a visibly stunned Freeman Mbowe visited the injured at the local hospital where he called for solidarity with the victims and stated that the highest priority should be given to caring for the injured. Subsequently, the party board withdrew for further considerations.

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Inspector General of Police (IGP), Said Mwema, announced nationwide criminal investigations to identify and detain the perpetrators. There were numerous tips from the population, he claimed, which the police would follow. IGP Mwema described the attack as a 'terrorist act' carried out by a handful of people or a group whose aim it was to undermine peace in the country. The police, he asserted, would do anything to bring the perpetrators to justice.

President Kikwete condemned the attack in an address published by the Directorate of Information at State House and offered his condolences to the families of those killed or injured in the incident. He immediately ordered extensive criminal investigations and called upon the people to cooperate with the law enforcement agencies. Also, the top government representative in the Arusha region, Regional Commissioner Magesa Mulongo, declared that he was 'shocked and deeply saddened' when he received the news of the bomb attack. His sympathy was with CHADEMA and the victims, declared Mulongo, who, in his capacity as the highest political representative of the President in the Arusha region, is also responsible for overseeing police and security forces.

In light of the developments just two days after the attack, these declarations from the government, however, appear not to have been fulfilled. Representatives of both government and opposition kept reproaching and accusing each other of being responsible for the attack. On Sunday, the CHADEMA members of Parliament declared that they would stay away from the sessions of the national parliament for one week in order to mourn with the victims and their families. When the regular budget session was opened as planned, however, Speaker Makinda of the National Assembly said that she had no idea why the CHADEMA members were not present in parliament, and then moved on with the agenda.

In a government announcement concerning the Arusha bombing, William Lukuvi, who is the Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office and the man responsible for policy, coordination and parliamentary affairs, said that the trend of some political parties to turn people against the police had finally culminated in the recent tragic events. Even though names were not given, Lukuvi's allegations were clearly levelled against CHADEMA. Furthermore, he stated that CHADEMA followers had prevented security forces from entering the scene after the explosion and thus from subjecting the perpetrators to criminal prosecution. One wonders — he added in an address to parliament — whether the obstruction of police work had happened accidentally, or had been planned. Moreover, he added that the police had been attacked by CHADEMA followers and were forced to resort to self-defence by using firearms. This statement led to harsh criticism from a number of Members of Parliament who accused the government of not responding to the increasing excess violence in the country.

Harsh Accusations and Counter-accusations

Nape Nnauye, secretary for ideology and publicity of CCM, went one step further by claiming CHADEMA itself had committed the attack in order to sabotage local elections in Arusha, as they had realised that the party was about to lose in the polls. The bombing, Nnauye continued, was part of CHADEMA's strategy to make cheap political capital out of the tragedy. These utterances provoked outrage and indignation both in the opposition and amongst many civilians critical of the government. Related comments and statements rapidly spread via social networking sites and online forums.

Later that day, CHADEMA chairman Freeman Mbowe met the press in Arusha with an official statement rejecting the claims of the government. He also made serious alle-

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gations against the police and security forces. Mbowe declared that the bombing had been planned and carried out by state security agencies. He further claimed that high-resolution video footage and photographs were available, which clearly showed the perpetrator, who was wearing the uniform of the government security forces. This person, Mbowe continued, had already been identified, and his name would be published soon. After throwing the grenade, the person in question had fired several shots from a firearm, boarded a police van and was subsequently taken away, he said. Videos and photographs had been deposited at a secure location and would be made public shortly. Mbowe proceeded to say that, following the detonation of the explosives, the crowd was shot at with pistols and submachine guns. Bullet holes were also detected in the tank of the van that was used as a stage for the speakers. Several people were admitted to hospital with bullet wounds. Mbowe called on president Kikwete to establish an independent committee of enquiry composed of judges. This committee would be provided with all of the evidence. The police, he continued, could not be trusted in this matter, as they were involved in planning and carrying out the bomb attack in the first place.

The Prerogative of Interpretation

In a number of Internet forums, among them the popular Jamii Forum — a Kiswahili service in Tanzania similar to Facebook — and in online discussion forums, a fierce battle for the prerogative to interpret the incident has been raging ever since. The overwhelming majority of participants in the debate are critical of the government. Many posts blame the government for remaining passive and calling CHADEMA activists terrorists, while condoning or even actively contributing to violence against members of the opposition. One of the posters, for instance, argues that the President was present 'at any given funeral in the country'

and had even cut short an official state visit after the church bombing on May 5th. When terrorists attacked the opposition movement, however, he showed a very low profile. Many posters highlighted their concern about Tanzania's potential descent into violence and chaos should the government fail to act consistently and call those behind the attack to account.

Clashes at Funeral

On June 18th, three days after the attack, the situation in Arusha once again escalated. An opposition meeting, held as a funeral service at the site of the attack was violently broken up as use of the site had been prohibited by its owner, the Arusha International Conference Center (AICC), which is an institution subordinate to the Tanzanian government. When members of the opposition movement subsequently called upon the crowd to leave the site and instead move to a nearby hospital to pay their last respects to the dead, police and security forces began to disperse the crowd by using truncheons and tear gas. For hours, chaos reigned in Arusha's city centre and the streets were covered in clouds of tear gas. Even the road connecting Arusha with Nairobi, the main arterial road of Northern Tanzania, was temporarily closed due to the turmoil. Four members of parliament for the opposition party were detained on the pretext of having addressed an illegal gathering. They were only released the next day. There were rumours claiming that one parliamentarian, Tundu Lissu, CHADEMA's chief whip, was killed in the police operation, but these turned out to be false. After being released from police custody, Mr. Lissu, however, reported ill treatment by the police. Journalists and other media workers also reported persecution and reprisals by the police, who they said had confiscated digital cameras, laptop computers and mobile phones.

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The mutual finger pointing continued as a consequence of the renewed clashes. CCM representatives accused the opposition of instigating hatred against the police and of trying to use the attack to score political points. Representatives of the opposition in turn denounced the excessive violence used by the police against the participants of a peaceful gathering, and, furthermore, accused the security forces of covering up the truth that lies behind the bomb attack.

“With An Iron Hand”

These recent developments in Arusha have caused a commotion in Tanzania’s National Assembly. A public statement made by Prime Minister Mizengo Pinda was met with a wave of outrage by the media. Answering the question of a member of parliament who wanted to know what the government intended to do about the increasing violence in Tanzania, Pinda emphasised that those who allegedly caused the chaos ought to be beaten up. He stated that the government was ready to take all necessary measures to preserve peace and security in the country. If the government was forced to use violence then people would suffer, so was his clear-cut warning. In the words of Mr. Pinda, the reason for the most recent of incidents could be CHADEMA's threat to make Tanzania ungovernable. One deputy from the oppositional party CUF (Civic United Front) deliberated that these remarks were infringing upon both the country’s Constitution and with the principle ‘innocent until proven guilty’. Pinda responded to this by claiming that the Constitution was only applicable to those who obeyed the law, not to people who opposed the lawful orders given by the state. Independent observers interpreted this statement made publicly in parliament as a blatant threat to CHADEMA and an appeal to police and security forces to respond with complete severity and rigour to any protests staged by oppositional groups or government critics.

Incidents During Local Elections

Even though local elections in the four electoral constituencies of Arusha were deferred to June 30th, 2013 for security reasons, polls opened for local elections in all other locations on June 15th, as planned. According to the reports of eyewitnesses, as well as for the people who were personally affected, the Arusha bomb attack overshadowed many other incidents.

In a public statement, national MP and head of CHADEMA's public relations, John Mnyika, declared that the governing CCM party had encouraged its followers to use violence against CHADEMA in the election venues, and that the population was intimidated by the police. He further stated that CHADEMA representatives had been severely beaten and abducted prior to the elections. Many of the victims were severely wounded. Furthermore, even though it was common knowledge who the perpetrators were, the police did not make any attempt to hold them accountable. CHADEMA has published a list in which these incidents are described in detail - including even the licence plate numbers of the police vehicles involved. In Monduli a national CHADEMA parliamentarian was seriously injured when he was attacked and beaten up by a group of 30 alleged CCM followers as he left the polling station. Later at the hospital, Joshua Nassari explained that he had managed to escape to his car where he had left his pistol. He used it to keep his attackers at bay. Otherwise, Nassari said, he would most likely have been beaten to death.

Obviously in many places the elections were rife with attempted or actual vote rigging. In Arusha, a high-ranking CCM politician was charged with an attempt to bribe the electoral authorities. In Mbagala, a suburb of Dar es Salaam, the number of voters entered in the electoral roll was greater than the number of voters entered in the national electoral register.

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In other places, registered voters were not able to find their names on the lists. Oppositional groups and local media reported numerous irregularities. Against the backdrop of all this, numerous independent observers, as well as many segments of the population had the strong impression that the governing party had attempted to rig the elections across the country.

The Future of the Opposition

According to official statements from the government and the opposition, both congratulate themselves on the outcome of the election. Out of a total of 22 mandates the governing party claimed 15 seats, whereas CHADEMA won 7. While CCM interprets the results as proof of the continued confidence of the majority of the population in the current government, CHADEMA representatives emphasise the significant gains. In the previous elections, CHADEMA held only one seat, which was defended successfully. In the current elections six more seats were won. In the face of the current campaign of intimidation and vote rigging this outcome could be assessed as very positive. Moreover, another four mandates will be filled in Arusha on June 30th. A party spokesperson pointed out that, given the total number of votes cast, CHADEMA (approx. 18,000 votes) was well ahead of CCM (with around 17,000 votes).

Independent observers regard the election outcome as proof of the fact that, politically, CHADEMA is now moving at eye level with the government and that the party stands a good chance of winning in the 2014 local elections, as well as in the 2015 parliamentary and presidential elections. The fundamental prerequisite for achieving this goal is a largely transparent and fair electoral process. In the light of recent developments, however, this appears to be far from being realistic. While an increasing popularity of the opposition even outside the country's urban centres since its electoral success in

the 2010¹ parliamentary and presidential elections can be observed, the levels of state repression against the opposition and critics of the government have increased substantially, as is clearly demonstrated in several independent reports.²

Religious Spiral of Violence

Growing political tension has been accompanied by an increase in religiously motivated strife and violence. This development culminated in the bomb attack that occurred during the consecration of a Roman Catholic Church in Arusha on May 5th, 2013. Shortly before the beginning of the ceremonial mass led jointly by Josaphat Lebulu, the Archbishop of Arusha, and Francisco Padillo, the Vatican's ambassador to Tanzania, an explosive device was thrown towards the assembled crowd of worshippers. The blast killed three people and left more than 60 injured, some of them severely. Among the dead and wounded on that day were numerous children.

President Jakaya Kikwete cut short his state visit to Kuwait immediately after the incident was reported. The president and other high-ranking government officials, among them vice president Mohamed Gharib Bilal and Prime Minister Mizengo Pinda, arrived in Arusha to visit the victims and to demonstrate to the public that all possible measures would be taken to investigate the background to the attack and to detect and

¹ The unicameral National Assembly of Tanzania or Bunge has 357 seats. In 2010, CHADEMA increased the number of its mandates from 11 to a total of 49.

² Tanzania Human Rights Report 2012, Legal and Human Rights Center, Press Freedom Index 2013, Reporters Without Borders (Tanzania fell 36 places to 70th out of 179), Annual Report 2012, Amnesty International, Freedom in the World 2013, Freedom House. See also: KAS Country Report ('Länderbericht') of September 2012 (German only): *Die Repression in Tansania nimmt zu – Opposition, Medien und Menschenrechtsgruppen in großer Sorge.*

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prosecute the criminal offenders. Like in the case of the assassinated priest on the island of Zanzibar early in 2013, the Tanzanian police force was complimented by FBI agents in their detection of potential links between religiously motivated attacks on Christian and Muslim clerics and the increasing interreligious conflict and dispute in the country. According to the Regional Commissioner of Arusha, at least 9 suspects were detained and questioned over the May 5th bombing. Four tourists from Saudi Arabia were released soon afterwards, while the whereabouts of an arrested Tanzanian national is not clear. At this point, however, the official sources of information on the current status of investigations are exhausted.

Ever since October 2012 tensions between Christian and Muslim populations have significantly increased, and the same is true for protests staged by Islamist groups against the state, or against Christian church officials. Some still unsolved cases of arson attacks on churches in Zanzibar and Dar es Salaam committed by crowds of enraged Muslims following the defilement of the Quran by a fourteen-year old youth have been in the news. Several waves of protest sparked by some radicalised Islamist officials of the UAMSHO movement, which advocates Zanzibar's secession from mainland Tanzania, repeatedly resulted in the declaration of a state of emergency in Zanzibar's capital city, and cost the life of a police officer. The catalyst was when one of the movement's religious leaders disappeared for three days. Followers used the UAMSHO facebook site to call for violent attacks on Christians. Late in 2012 even Dar es Salaam was repeatedly shaken by protests against the detention of radical Islamist Sheikh Ponda Issa Ponda. Another link in the chain of incidents caused by religiously motivated violence was the attack on the Secretary to the Mufti of Zanzibar in November 2012. Sheikh Fadhil Soraga, a

prominent advocate of interreligious dialogue suffered an acid attack by two unidentified assailants while he was out jogging. His face and upper part of the body sustained severe injuries.

In separate attacks, two catholic priests were shot by gunmen in Zanzibar in December 2012 and February 2013, respectively. To help local police thoroughly investigate the killing of father Evarist Mushi, foreign investigators from the US Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) were invited. No substantial results have been disclosed to the public so far. In the course of ongoing disputes between Christians and Muslims in the region of Geita, south of Lake Victoria, a Christian priest was beheaded. Luckily it was possible to prevent the enraged crowd from burning down the mosque in which the escaped Muslims were hiding in return.

Against the backdrop of the most recent attack on the CHADEMA rally on June 15th, which, in the face of circumstantial evidence appears to be politically motivated, attention has been once again turned to the bombing in Arusha on May 5th. Observers wonder whether there is a link between both incidents and between the known cases of politically and religiously motivated violence at large.

Loss of Power and Eruption of Violence

With the developments of recent months in mind — the increasing support for the opposition, the considerable loss of prestige on the part of the government, (currently limited) massive popular protests³, and the ongoing constitutional reform process⁴ —

³ In Mwara (Southern Tanzania) mass protests in connection with the development of large deposits of natural gas were repeatedly violently quashed by the police; deaths and injuries were recorded.

⁴ The Constitutional review process initiated by the President himself is perceived today

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the governing CCM sees its monopoly of power called into question. From Tanganyika's independence in 1961 to the reintroduction of a multi-party system in 1992, the current ruling party had been governing the country as a state party in a one-party system. It was even dominant for another ten years after the reintroduction of the multi-party system, which was applied for the first time during presidential elections in 1995. Nevertheless, the opposition succeeded in establishing itself as a visible alternative in the 2010 elections. Numerous international and national experts consider a change of government in the coming years as conceivable. However, they are equally worried that the governing elites will use all the means at their disposal to prevent that from happening. The police and security forces' increasingly repressive response to people's legitimate protests and criticism are perceived as a mere foretaste of things to come two years from now, when the next elections are held. The number of cases of threats, repression and persecution of opposition activists and government critics is steadily growing.

In this context, subtle forms of intimidation and manipulation are alternated with the outright use of violence. Usually, the perpetrators of violence remain unidentified, or their identities are concealed. Perpetrators are not called to account by the government law enforcement agencies. Even when there is clear evidence of the involvement of security forces in the killings, perpetrators are protected and go unpunished.⁵ It is the vic-

by CCM as a threat to its own position. A draft submitted by the constitutional committee is acknowledged to be reform-oriented and would likely limit the role of CCM. CCM officials voiced their criticism.

⁵ Michael Kamuhanda, regional police commander (RCP) of Iringa who verifiably witnessed personally the killing of journalist Daudi Mwangosi in September 2012 by the police without taking any action to stop it, was appointed deputy commissioner of po-

tims who are criminalised. They are regularly charged with "incitement of masses, sedition and terrorism". Such reinterpretation of the roles of victims and perpetrators at the very highest levels of the government is systematic. While in parliament the prime minister publicly demanded that protesters be bludgeoned, after the most recent attack in Arusha, the governing party's spokesman charged the opposition with committing the bomb attack on their rally themselves in order to create compassion and support. These statements speak for themselves.

New Dimension of Violence

The escalation of language is symptomatic of the self-fuelling cycle of violence. It is still unclear to which extent religious and political motives are connected. This is also the case when one regards the two bomb attacks of May and June 2013 in Arusha. Both incidents, however, reveal a new dimension of violence. Among the victims of both the church bombing and of the attack on the CHADEMA rally were many children. It is not just because of this that many commentators refer to the attacks as acts of terrorism. What is common in both cases is that little has been made public from the concrete results of the criminal investigation.⁶

After the church bombing, the Tanzanian government immediately contacted the US embassy to invite FBI investigators to help with the investigations, yet it failed to make

lice (DCP) at the police national headquarters in Dar es Salaam in June 2013, thus being promoted to one of the highest police positions in Tanzania.

⁶ Even though both attacks were allegedly committed using a hand grenade and both venues are close to the Kenyan border with Arusha, security agencies see no indication of a possible connection with Al-Shabaab, a group that perpetrated attacks in Kenya following the same pattern in the past.

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such a request after the most recent attack on the CHADEMA rally. Critics regard this as proof that the government is not genuinely interested in solving the case of the attack on the opposition. While eyewitness reports seriously incriminating the police are printed in the media, CCM officials continue to shift the blame onto the opposition. However, it must be noted that CHADEMA, up until the publication date of this report (June 25th, 2013), has not made any of the previously announced photo and video evidence public.

At present there is no sign that tensions will start to ease. On the contrary, public threats uttered by government officials give reason to fear a further heightening of tension in the future. In view of this, the upcoming election of four town representatives scheduled for June 30th in Arusha once again holds a lot of potential for conflict.

The fact that even local by-elections involving a handful of municipal mandates could lead to massive outbreaks of violence and finally the bomb attack in Arusha leads media commentators to the conclusion that the forthcoming elections in 2014 and 2015 have the potential to plunge the country into chaos and violence if those responsible do not change their course immediately. Pessimists have voiced their doubts as to whether the current political, religious, and social tensions can be channelled for such a long time. In this context, the representatives of the international community in Tanzania have called for rapid action. In an interview with the country's biggest English-language daily newspaper "The Citizen", the head of the EU Delegation to Tanzania, Mr Filiberto Sebregondi, declared that the lack of investigative results and continued impunity for those responsible for the most recent acts of violence posed a threat to the democratic process and the future of the

country.⁷ Many will find it difficult not to agree with Mr. Sebregondi's assessment.

⁷ The Citizen, June 25th, 2013, page 1. <http://www.thecitizen.co.tz/News/EU--Act-swiftly-on-Arusha-/-/1840392/1890874/-/1s8siw/-/index.html>