

REFLECTION, INQUIRY AND THE SEARCH FOR NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AFTER 2025 ELECTIONS

Tanzania shows resolve as it navigates defining national moment

For Tanzania, November 3, 2025, marked more than a routine constitutional milestone. It marked the swearing-in of Samia Suluhu Hassan as President of the United Republic of Tanzania following the October 29, 2025 General Election. The ceremony was held in Dodoma.

For many Tanzanians, the moment offered a different experience, one that was less celebratory and more reflective. It unfolded in an atmosphere of unusual quietness, as the nation was still absorbing the weight of the events that had just transpired. It was a historic moment, but one marked by a sense of pause, with the country navigating a period unlike any other.

Acknowledging the situation Tanzania was going through, after taking the oath of office, President Samia Suluhu Hassan pledged to form a Commission of Inquiry to investigate what had transpired and led to the unpalatable situation. On November 25, 2025, the Commission of Inquiry into the incidents that occurred during and after the October 2025 General Election was officially established.

The Commission, chaired by retired Chief Justice Mohamed Chande Othman, was tasked with investigating the root causes of the violence, examining the motives of those involved in planning and executing the acts, and assessing the extent of damage, including loss of life, injuries, destruction of property and infrastructure, as well as broader social and economic impacts.

The commission was also tasked with reviewing the context and measures taken to detect, prevent, and respond to the incidents and recommending areas for improvement to strengthen shared responsibility between the government and citizens in upholding peace, the rule of law, human rights, and good governance.

President Samia also asked the commission to propose a framework for inclusive national dialogue and reconciliation to prevent recurrence of the situation.

The government's decision to establish the Commission of Inquiry was, in many respects, an early response to the situation. It signalled a willingness to investigate, to reflect, and to confront uncomfortable realities through structured and lawful processes.

Around the world, such mechanisms have been employed when societies face moments that demand truth, accountability, and direction. The lesson is consistent: when nations investigate themselves, they are not displaying weakness; they are exercising institutional maturity.

Tanzania's choice aligns with this global pattern, notably through the appointment of eminent personalities with strong national and international reputations to lead the process. Yet institutions alone do not determine the outcome of such moments. The real test lies beyond them; it lies in the response of the nation itself.

The events of October 29, 2025, and



Vehicles and a filling station set ablaze during the October 29, 2025 violence.

the days that followed revealed a complex and, at times, uncomfortable reality. Rights did not operate in isolation; they intersected and, in some cases, collided. The quest to organise riots met the right to vote.

Freedom of expression intersected with the duty to maintain public order, while access to information came into tension with national security considerations.

Freedom of movement, access to services, economic rights, and the right to life were all affected in different ways. These were not abstract tensions but unfolded on the streets, in homes, and across workplaces.

The scale of disruption was significant. There were acts of violence that led to loss of lives, injuries, destruction of public and private properties and infrastructure, and interruptions to essential services.

For many Tanzanians, these were lived experiences rather than distant reports. For others, particularly those who did not participate in the violence, the period was marked by fear, uncertainty, and restricted access to everyday essentials.

Numerous testimonies emerged from people across different parts of the country.

"We did not witness violence in our area, but the tension in the community was huge. Most of the time we were trying to follow what was going on in badly affected areas, but there was scarcity of information," a citizen in Tanga recalled.

"I paid Tsh50,000 for a bodaboda trip that would normally cost Tsh5,000 during the period marred by violence," said another in Dar es Salaam.

"I could not travel to Tanga to attend the burial of my father-in-law because there was no public transport from Dar es Salaam to upcountry regions," remarked another resident of Dar es Salaam.

In Mwanza, one resident described the paralysis of daily life: "We could not leave our homes to buy groceries



The Commission of Inquiry, chaired by retired Chief Justice Mohamed Chande Othman, hears testimony from the Minister for Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation, Ambassador Mahmoud Thabit Kombo. (File photo)

because nearby markets were not operating; almost all businesses had closed." Even the few stalls that remained open charged highly inflated prices, placing basic necessities out of reach for many.

The human toll was equally devastating.

"My ailing mother passed away because we could not access healthcare services," another resident recounted, underscoring the life-threatening consequences of the disruption.

"Several of us lost jobs after filling stations were burnt by the rioting youth," Aziza Haji recounted.

In Dar es Salaam, Tony Abraham recalled losing his livelihood when a truck loaded with printing materials was burnt to ashes, resulting in losses exceeding Tsh300 million.

Meanwhile, transport disruptions compounded the crisis. Trucks carrying perishable goods from the Southern Highlands failed to reach key markets, leaving traders to incur substantial financial losses as their produce rotted.

Mobile banking vans were set ablaze, while several ATMs were vandalised. A substantial number of filling stations were destroyed by fire. Rioters also

brace certain findings while rejecting others. Narratives may compete. Expectations, shaped in advance, may collide with reality.

But truth does not bend to preference. If the Commission, led by experienced and globally renowned Justice Othman, is to serve the purpose, its findings must be engaged with in good faith. To dismiss them outright or to accept them selectively risks undermining the very process intended to guide the country forward towards reconciliation, tranquillity, maintaining peace, safety, tranquillity, reconciliation, national unity, rule of law and socio-economic development.

This is where national maturity becomes decisive, and where Tanzania has consistently shown its strength. For decades, the country has been recognised for its peace, safety, unity, and enduring preference for dialogue over division. These are deeply rooted in Tanzania's identity, shaped through history, from its role in Africa's liberation struggles to its contributions to regional peacebuilding under leaders such as Julius Nyerere, Ali Hassan Mwinyi, Benjamin Mkapa, and Jakaya Kikwete.

That enduring character has once again come into view. Even in recent events, observers across the region have noted with admiration how swiftly Tanzania regained a sense of normalcy following the swearing-in of President Samia Suluhu Hassan. Where similar situations elsewhere might have led to prolonged uncertainty, Tanzania demonstrated a clear and collective effort to restore calm and resume the rhythm of national life, an indication of a society anchored in stability, even in moments of test.

What lies ahead is not a test of whether differences exist; they do, as in any vibrant society – but whether those differences can be addressed constructively. Tanzania's long-standing commitment to dialogue provides a strong foundation for this.

Reconciliation, in this context, is not about erasing disagreement or determining winners and losers. It is about creating space for engagement, acknowledging realities, and shaping a shared path forward grounded in the national interest.

This moment calls for qualities that Tanzania has repeatedly demonstrated: restraint, reflection, and responsibility. Institutions will play their part, but it is the collective response of citizens and leaders alike that will define the next chapter, guided by its core values of peace, safety, tranquillity, national unity, rule of law and reconciliation.

The Commission's report will help explain the past, but it is how the nation responds that will shape the future.

Tanzania stands not only at a defining tranquillity moment but also at an opportunity. An opportunity to reaffirm its values, strengthen its peace, safety and national unity and move forward with wisdom, balance, and shared resolve.

That is the measure of a nation, and Tanzania has shown it is equal to the moment.