



STOLEN ELECTIONS IN 2024: CHAD, VENEZUELA, MOZAMBIQUE

Key points

Three presidential elections held in 2024 in Chad, Venezuela and Mozambique, were marked by the systematic manipulation of electoral processes and the repression of opposition forces.

- 1. Before the vote: preparing the fraud**
Manipulation begins long before polling stations open. **Electoral bodies are captured, electoral rolls are inflated and inconvenient candidates are eliminated.**
- 2. During the vote: controlling the ballot**
On polling day, fraud takes visible forms: **the militarisation of polling stations, voter intimidation, the absence of independent observation, bribery, and direct manipulation of ballots.** Ballot box removal, pre-filled ballot papers and surveillance devices strip the vote of its substance.
- 3. After the vote: locking in the results**
The counting process serves to consolidate the fraud. **Results are hastily announced, tally sheets withheld or falsified, appeals ignored.** Institutional opacity makes independent verification impossible.
- 4. After the results: silencing dissent**
Electoral fraud is accompanied by **targeted repression.** Arrests, media blackouts and the criminalisation of opponents prevent any organised contestation, locking in the political balance of power over the long term.



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CHRONOLOGY

6 MAY 2024

Chad is holding a presidential election **presented as the end of the military transition** that began in 2021.

AUGUST 2024

A month of mobilisations in Venezuela followed the announcement of Nicolás Maduro's victory. **At least 25 people were killed and more than 2,400 were arrested.**

19 OCTOBER 2024

In Mozambique, **Elvino Dias and Paulo Guambe**, two opposition figures, **are assassinated.**

28 JULY 2024

Venezuela is holding a presidential election in a context of a **complete lockdown of the electoral process.**

9 OCTOBER 2024

Mozambique is holding a presidential and general election **intended to renew the executive and legislative branches.**

MAY 2025

Succès Masra, the main opposition figure in Chad, **is arrested and sentenced to 20 years in prison.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Democracy is not limited to the right to vote; and, at the very least, it requires that this right be exercised under **conditions of legality, transparency and oversight**. A vote whose result cannot be verified or challenged is nothing more than a clumsy attempt to retroactively legitimise an authoritarian regime through the ballot box.

In 2024, three presidential elections in Chad, Venezuela and Mozambique, confirmed this pattern: elections used solely to prolong exhausted regimes.

While the contexts differ (prolonged military transition in Chad, entrenched civilian authoritarianism in Venezuela, and a dominant party-state in Mozambique), the mechanisms are identical: **institutional capture, electoral process falsification, opposition repression and the confiscation of results**.



Protesters during a nationwide strike to protest the provisional results of an October 9 election, in Maputo, Mozambique on October 21, 2024

II. HOW REGIMES LOCK DOWN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

In all three cases, **fraud is not improvised but rooted in institutions deliberately perverted** to enable it. Electoral bodies, theoretically meant to guarantee the neutrality of the vote, are led by individuals loyal to those in power:

In Chad, the **National Election Management Agency** (ANGE) and the Constitutional Council report directly to the presidency. At the last minute, the authorities refused accreditation to thousands of civil electoral observers trained by the European Union (1, 2).

In Venezuela, the **National Electoral Council** (CNE) is likewise controlled by regime allies. Voting machines are closed to any audit, source codes is inaccessible, and results transmission is centralised without external verification (5).

In Mozambique, the **National Electoral Commission** (CNE) and the Constitutional Council operate under the tutelage of the *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (FRELIMO). The EU Election Observation Mission noted “*unjustified alterations of results*” and the failure to publish polling station-level tally sheets (7, 8).

These institutional lock-ins make genuine citizen oversight impossible and guarantee that those in power control the outcome even before the first vote is cast.

III. THREE RIGGED ELECTIONS

1. CHAD

On 6 May 2024, Chad held a presidential election presented as the end of the military transition that began after the death of Idriss Déby Itno in 2021. In reality, **the election served to legitimise the continuation of Mahamat Idriss Déby's rule**. The ANGE, officially independent but fully controlled by the regime, organised the vote without an independent audit of electoral rolls and under strict political oversight. The Constitutional Council and media authority were likewise subordinated to the regime through partisan appointments.

Transparency was virtually non-existent: around 3,000 civil society observers, whose training had been funded by the European Union, were blocked from entering polling stations, in some cases on the very morning of the vote (1, 2). Other independent observers, both European and local, were denied accreditation.

Massive fraud was reported: ballot-stuffing, the organised transport of pro-regime voters, pre-filled ballot papers, and ballot boxes removed by the military to be counted off-site. The opposition party *Les Transformateurs*, led by Succès Masra, documented these practices.

Despite the logistical complexity of the count, official results were announced just three days after the vote. This impossibly short timeframe made **independent verification unfeasible and consolidated the regime's narrative**. "Celebratory" gunfire by security forces (in reality, acts of intimidation) left at least nine people dead in the capital (2).

The election took place in a climate of intimidation and targeted repression of the opposition. In February 2024, Yaya Dillo was killed during a military raid, denounced as an extrajudicial execution (11). After the election, Succès Masra filed a legal challenge, which was dismissed without investigation. In May 2025, he was arrested and sentenced to 20 years in prison (3).

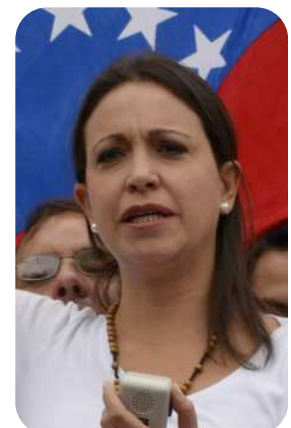


Portrait of Succès Masra, February 2024

2. VENEZUELA

On 28 July 2024, Venezuela held a presidential election in a **context of total electoral lock-in** by the regime of Nicolás Maduro. The leading opposition figure, María Corina Machado, was arbitrarily disqualified by judicial decision, depriving the opposition of its natural candidate. Her replacement, Edmundo González Urrutia, was widely leading in all independent polls.

Very few international observers were authorised: only a handful from the Carter Center and four experts from the United Nations were granted strictly controlled access. The CNE, controlled by the regime, further deepened the **opacity of the process**.



María Corina Machado, May 2014

Faced with a lack of access to official tally sheets, the opposition mounted a parallel monitoring operation. Using Starlink receivers and scanners smuggled into the country, they collected nearly 80% of the tally sheets, revealing 67% of the vote for González against 30% for Maduro (4).

The regime announced Maduro’s victory the very next day with 51% of the vote, later invoking a “cyberattack” to justify the failure to publish the tally sheets. The European Union, the United States, the Organisation of American States and the G7 refused to recognise the results (5).

Protests that followed were violently repressed, and opposition media outlets were blocked (6).



Protest in Venezuela following the announcement of Nicolás Maduro’s victory, 3 August 2024

3. MOZAMBIQUE

On 9 October 2024, Mozambique held presidential and general elections meant to renew executive and legislative power. The election confirmed FRELIMO’s grip over the electoral process. Independent organisations reported registration anomalies, including “ghost voters” and areas where the number of registered voters exceeded the estimated voting-age population: creating the conditions for fictitious votes benefiting the ruling party.

Two figures close to opposition leader Venâncio Mondlane, **lawyer Elvino Dias and political organiser Paulo Guambe, were assassinated** (10).



Venancio Mondlane, Reuters

On election day, EU observation missions and the civic network Mais Integridade documented **widespread irregularities**: ballot-stuffing, abusive invalidation of ballots, attempted bribery, expulsions of observers and obstructions to observation (8, 9).

During the count, the EU mission noted “irregularities” and “unjustified alterations” of results. The CNE declared Daniel Chapo the winner, and the Constitutional Council confirmed this in December 2024 (7, 8, 9, 10). International media highlighted the gap between these warnings and the final validation of results (13, 9).



Polling station in Nampula, Mozambique

IV. OPERATIONAL LESSONS

These recommendations can only be effective if the ruling authorities are willing to restrain themselves, which, in the cases studied, is precisely where the problem lies. They become operational only when sustained civic vigilance generates a collective balance of power strong enough to leave the government no choice but to yield.

1. Genuine independence of the electoral umpire

The capture of electoral commissions and constitutional courts was the cornerstone of all three frauds. **Upstream institutional strengthening** (including budgetary autonomy, pluralistic appointments, and the mandatory publication of detailed results) is essential **to prevent structural manipulation**.

2. Robust and protected electoral observation

The neutralisation or restriction of observers facilitated the fraud. **Effective and secure access for both national and international observers must be guaranteed**, and their protection reinforced against pressure and intimidation.

3. Transparency of the count and data

Falsification was consolidated at the stage of counting and compilation. **Real-time publication of polling station tally sheets**, combined with **parallel verification systems**, are indispensable safeguards.

4. Protection of post-electoral contestation

The wave of repression that follows the announcement of results locks in the balance of power. **Rapid protection mechanisms for political leaders, journalists and observers** are necessary to preserve the capacity for contestation. This involves, in particular, accurately documenting human rights violations and creating solidarity networks that support those involved in protests and anticipate repression.

5. Targeted and anticipatory international pressure

Coordinated sanctions and diplomatic mechanisms, activated before, during and after the vote, can make fraud politically costly for its perpetrators. Such measures can isolate those responsible, swiftly delegitimise falsified results, and strengthen the position of domestic democratic actors.

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