

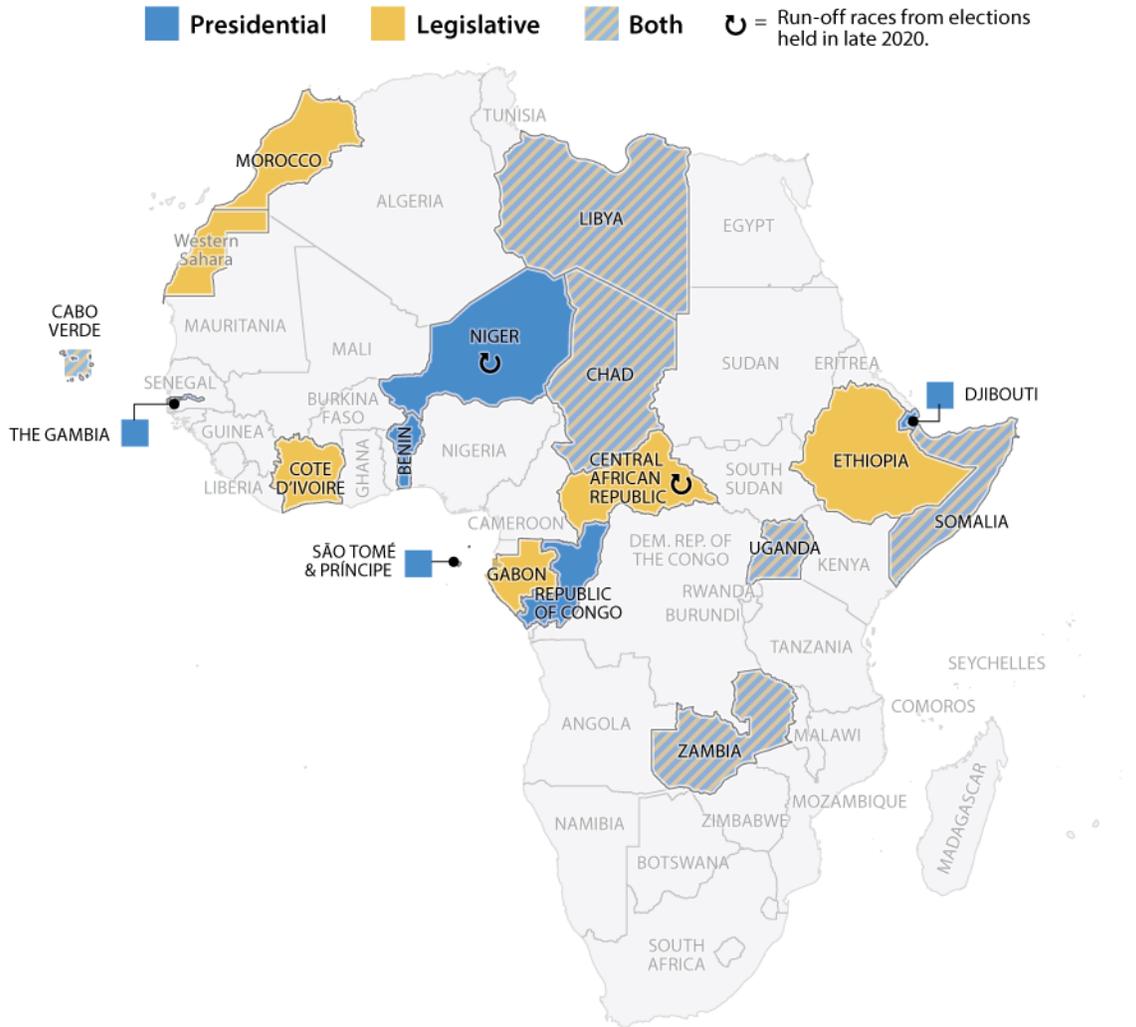


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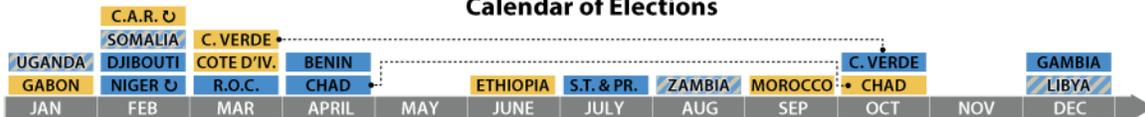
African Elections in 2021

Seventeen African countries are slated to hold presidential and/or legislative polls in 2021. Scheduled election dates are listed below; some may be subject to change due to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic or other factors.

Elections Scheduled for 2021



Calendar of Elections



Source: Created by CRS. Election data derived from the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa, the National Democratic Institute and other news sources. Map boundaries from U.S. Department of State (2017).

Note: Timeline is arranged by scheduled date, or, where applicable, the month by which the election is due. Future listed election dates are current as of January 29, 2021. Some have not been confirmed, and several may be subject to change due to the COVID-19 pandemic or other factors. In December 2020, President Trump announced that the United States would recognize Morocco's claim of sovereignty over Western Sahara, and the U.S. Embassy in Rabat indicated that U.S. government maps would change as a result. Biden Administration officials have suggested that they may review this policy shift. Morocco's legislative elections extend to the roughly 85% of the disputed territory of Western Sahara that Morocco administers.

Selected Country Election Snapshots

Uganda (*Presidential & Parliamentary, Jan. 14*)

President Yoweri Museveni was elected to a sixth term in January amid an internet blackout, in polls marred by harassment of the opposition and reported fraud. U.S. officials asserted that the electoral process was “fundamentally flawed.” Museveni received 58% of the vote. Opposition candidate Robert Kyagulanyi, aka Bobi Wine, received 34%; his new National Unity Platform leads the opposition after winning 17% of directly elected seats in the National Assembly, in which Museveni’s party retained a majority. Over a dozen ministers lost elections to opposition candidates.

Djibouti (*Presidential, due by Feb. 8*)

President Ismail Omar Guelleh, in power since 1999, is running for a fifth term. (Term limits were lifted in 2010.) Djibouti has a multiparty system, but the opposition remains constrained and promised electoral reforms have yet to be implemented.

Somalia (*Presidential & Parliamentary, due by Feb. 8*)

President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo is seeking a second four-year term in a ten-candidate race that includes two former presidents. While efforts were made in 2020 to move to a one-person, one-ballot system, the federal government and states agreed in September 2020 on an indirect electoral model for 2021 in which clan-based electoral colleges vote for lower house legislators, senators are elected by federal state assemblies, and both houses then elect the president.

CAR (*Parliamentary (second round), due in Feb.*)

Parliamentary run-off elections are slated amid a renewed armed rebellion against President Faustin-Archange Touadera.

Niger (*Presidential (second round), Feb. 21*)

The two top candidates in the December 2020 presidential election will compete in a run-off: Mohamed Bazoum of the ruling party led the first round with 39%, and former president Mahamane Ousmane trailed with 17%. The winner will succeed Mahamadou Issoufou, who is leaving office after two terms, marking Niger’s first democratic transition between two elected presidents. A key opposition leader was barred from running due to a prior criminal conviction that he disputes.

Cabo Verde (*Parliamentary, due by March, Presidential, due Oct.*)

Cabo Verde’s semi-presidential system divides powers between a prime minister appointed by parliament, which is up for full renewal in March, and a directly elected president. Incumbent president Jorge Carlos Fonseca faces constitutional term limits. The country has earned a reputation for competitive polls and peaceful, regular transfers of power over the past two decades.

Côte d’Ivoire (*Parliamentary, March 6*)

Legislative polls will test President Alassane Ouattara’s efforts to assuage the opposition after circumventing constitutional term limits to win a controversial third term in violent, divisive elections in late 2020. Key opposition parties that boycotted the 2020 elections have signaled a willingness to participate in the March polls, likely reducing the risk of electoral violence—yet tensions remain high.

Republic of Congo (*Presidential, March 21*)

President Denis Sassou Nguesso, who has ruled the country for nearly 40 years, is expected to win a sixth term. His last reelection, in 2016, set off a brief armed conflict in which state security forces reportedly committed serious abuses; the State Department described those polls as “deeply flawed.” Key opposition leaders were recently sentenced to lengthy jail terms on state security charges. Freedom House reports that “there is

little opportunity for the opposition to gain power through elections.”

Benin (*Presidential, April 11*)

President Patrice Talon is widely expected to win a second five-year term. His government has sharply curtailed Benin’s once vibrant civic space, cracking down on press freedoms and enacting a new electoral code that effectively excluded the opposition from legislative elections in 2019. Several prominent opposition leaders have been sentenced in absentia for various crimes and are presently in exile.

Chad (*Presidential, April 11 & Parliamentary, Oct. 24*)

President Idriss Déby, in power since 1990, is seeking a sixth term. The State Department described the last elections, in 2016, as “neither free nor fair.” National Assembly elections are scheduled to take place in October, after a six-year delay.

Ethiopia (*Parliamentary, June 5*)

The federal government’s decision to postpone August 2020 elections due to COVID-19 spurred tensions with the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), which had dominated Ethiopia’s ruling coalition until a political transition brought Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to office in 2018. An armed conflict between federal forces and the TPLF in the northeastern Tigray region that began in November has since displaced over two million people. Insecurity in Tigray and in other parts of the country, alongside concerns about democratic backsliding, raise questions about the prospects for credible elections in 2021.

São Tomé & Príncipe (*Presidential, due by July*)

President Evaristo Carvalho is running for a second five-year term. The country has experienced multiple peaceful transfers of power, and elections are generally credible and competitive.

Zambia (*Presidential & Parliamentary, due by Aug. 12*)

President Edgar Lungu is likely to seek a legally controversial third term against recurrent opposition candidate Hakainde Hichilema. Elections in 2016 ended with opposition riots. Lungu’s administration, which faces a debt crisis and corruption allegations, appears likely to continue to use the courts and security apparatus to obtain a favorable electoral outcome.

The Gambia (*Referendum TBD; Presidential, due Dec. 4*)

President Adama Barrow, whose surprise victory over longtime leader Yahya Jammeh in 2016 ushered in dramatic governance and human rights reforms, is expected to seek a second term. Political tensions have risen as the coalition that brought Barrow to power has fractured—in part over Barrow’s decision to serve a full five-year term, instead of three years as he initially pledged. Prospects for a referendum on a new constitution are uncertain as the National Assembly rejected a draft charter in 2020.

Libya (*Referendum TBD; Parliamentary & Presidential, Dec. 24*)

In November 2020, members of the U.N.-organized Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF) announced plans to hold general elections on Libya’s Independence Day (12/24). While preparing for these elections, Libyan regional bodies and the LPDF plan to select a new interim Presidency Council and Prime Minister by February 5. In January 2021, Libyan leaders also agreed to hold a referendum in 2021 on the proposed constitution drafted by the Constitutional Drafting Assembly elected in 2014.

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