

MALAWI

Date of Elections: June 29, 1978

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the members of Parliament following the premature dissolution of this body on April 18, 1978. General elections had previously taken place in May 1976.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Malawi, the National Assembly, is composed of 87 members elected for 5 years and up to 15 additional members nominated by the President in order to enhance the representative character of the Assembly, or to represent particular minority or other special interests in the Republic.

Electoral System

All citizens at least 21 years of age who have resided in Malawi for a continuous period of two years and who are ordinarily resident in a constituency, or were born, are employed, or carry on a business there, may vote in this same constituency for members of the National Assembly, if registered. The insane, persons convicted of crime, undischarged bankrupts and persons owing allegiance to a foreign State are disqualified from registration as voters.

Electoral registers are drawn up on the constituency level. Voting is not compulsory.

Citizens having attained the age of 25 years who are able to speak and read the English language well enough to take an active part in the proceedings of the National Assembly, are registered electors, and are members of the Malawi Congress Party are qualified to be elected as members of the National Assembly. Persons holding public office and members of the armed forces may not stand for election.

To be nominated, a candidate must be supported by at least two voters registered in his constituency. There is a limit of five candidates per constituency. District conferences of the Party prepare the lists of candidates. Whoever receives the most votes in each one of the 87 single-member constituencies is declared elected.

A by-election is held to fill any elective seats of the National Assembly falling vacant between general elections.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

In a speech to delegates of the Malawi Congress Party Convention at Lilongwe (the capital) on October 29, 1977, President of the Republic Banda disclosed that the country would have another parliamentary election — the second in slightly more than two years. The election date was announced on June 5, 1978.

As opposed to the country's previous parliamentary elections, those of 1978 provided the citizenry a certain freedom of choice. Of the 87 Assembly seats, 40 were contested by only one candidate while a total of 112 Malawi Congress Party (the country's sole party) candidates ran for the remaining 47. According to results announced on July 1, incumbent MPs (including two Ministers) were replaced in 31 of these districts. Unopposed candidates were elected in 33 constituencies. The remaining seven seats were declared vacant because the candidates had failed a test of proficiency in the English language, which is the language of debate in the legislature.

President Banda named a new Cabinet on July 5; six new Ministers were designated.

Statistics

1. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the National Assembly

Voters.	3,000,000 (approx.)
Valid votes.	371,000 (approx.)

Political Group	Number of seats
Malawi Congress Party.	87

2. Distribution of Members of Parliament according to Sex

Men.	79
Women.	8
	87