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President Andry Rajoelina (2019-2023) resigns ahead of the 9 November presidential election in line with the precepts of Madagascar's constitution. This follows the Haut Cour Constitutionnelle (HCC) (constitutional court) (HCC) ruling which dismissed petitions to block his re-election to the concern of the opposition. The publication of the final candidate list on 9 September sets the stage for election campaigning to begin. However, Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante (CENI) (electoral commission) confirms that as of 11 September, it is approximately MGA 15 billion (\$3.32m) short of its required MGA 80 billion (\$17.6m) budget. Madagascar receives additional foreign development assistance underscoring its dependence on such external help. A deadly stampede on 25 August in Mahamasina Municipal Stadium ahead of a major sporting event kills 13 people and injures 80 others. Election rallies are still scheduled to take place in the stadium despite safety concerns.

President resigns ahead of the election

President **Andry Rajoelina** (2019 – 2023) formally resigned from office on 9 September following his confirmation as a candidate in the upcoming 9 November presidential election.¹ Madagascar's constitution mandates that a sitting president seeking re-election must step down at least 60 days before election day. Rajoelina filed his resignation shortly after the **Haut Cour Constitutionnelle (HCC)** (constitutional court) cleared him to contest the election earlier that day by dismissing three appeals challenging the legitimacy of his candidacy.² These applications centred on the claim that, as a **French** citizen, Rajoelina could not be president. At least one application claimed that under Madagascar's law, Rajoelina automatically lost his Malagasy citizenship when he acquired his French one in 2014. Rajoelina's French citizenship has been one of two major scandals surrounding his presidency in recent months, the other being the arrest of his then-chief of staff **Romy Voos Andrianarisoa** by the **United Kingdom's (UK) National Crime Agency (NCA)** police on 12 August on charges of corruption (*see ARC Briefing Madagascar Aug 2023*).

Following Rajoelina's resignation, the HCC was supposed to appoint senate president **Herimanana Razafimahefa** as the interim president in line with the country's constitutional stipulations, however, Razafimahefa declined to assume this role citing unspecified "*personal reasons*".³ In response to Razafimahefa's refusal, the HCC ruled that the current cabinet, led by prime minister **Christian Ntsay**, would serve as a 'collegiate government' in place of an interim president. However, the HCC also ruled that this collegiate government would not be instilled with all the powers of an interim president and notably would not be able to make senior governmental appointments, dissolve the legislature, accredit ambassadors, issue pardons, or declare a state of emergency.

Opposition leaders have condemned these HCC rulings and on 12 September, a group of 10 opposition presidential candidates submitted a letter to the **Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante (CENI)** (electoral commission) alleging that the HCC was biased towards Rajoelina and was proving to be unreliable in the adjudication of electoral issues.⁴ Among those who sent the letter were leading contenders such as former presidents **Marc Ravalomanana** (2002-2009), **Hery**

¹ Reuters, 10 Sep 2023

² EWN, 11 Sep 2023

³ Midi Madagasikara, 11 Sep 2023

⁴ Madagascar Tribune, 12 Sep 2023

Rajaonarimampianina (2014-2018) and **Toliara** member of parliament (MP) **Siteny Randianasoloniaiko**.⁵ These candidates allege that the combination of the HCC's rulings allowing Rajoelina's candidacy and the elevating of cabinet instead of installing an interim president amounted to "*an institutional coup*"⁶. The opposition is concerned that by expanding the powers of the cabinet – even with the aforementioned limitations – the HCC has ensured that Rajoelina remains the de facto president despite his resignation on 9 September.

This criticism of the HCC is particularly worrying as it expressly states that these opposition candidates do not trust the country's apex court. This means that should the HCC be required to rule on the election's legitimacy, these candidates may not accept an adverse ruling in the likely event that the election results are disputed.

Pre-campaigning to begin as election candidate list finalised

Opposition criticism of the HCC, the government, and Rajoelina's candidacy is expected to intensify as the various candidate's pre-campaign efforts get underway. These preparations and unofficial campaigning have accelerated following the HCC releasing the final list of 13 candidates on 9 September.⁷ These candidates are as follows, listed in the order they will appear on the ballot:

1. Rajoelina
2. Ravalomanana
3. Rajaonarimampianina
4. Randrianasoloniaiko
5. **Tahina Razafinjoelina**
6. Former territorial planning minister, **Hajo Herivelona Andrianainnarivelo**
7. Former **Toamasina** mayor **Roland Ratsiraka**
8. Former finance minister **Auguste Richard Paraina**
9. Former businessman **Andry Raobelina**
10. **Ikongo** MP **Jean Brunelle Razafitsiandraofa**
11. **Lalaina Harilanto Ratsirahonanana**
12. **Sendrison Daniela Raderanirina**
13. **Jean-Jacques Jedidia Ratsietison**

Although there will be 13 names on the ballot only Rajoelina, Ravalomanana, Rajaonarimampianina, and Randrianasoloniaiko are expected to have a material impact on the election. Rajoelina and Ravalomanana are again viewed as the election frontrunners and there is a strong possibility that the two will proceed to a second-round election in a repeat of the 2018 presidential election. Notably, Randrianasoloniaiko appears to present the most serious threat to Rajoelina's support base – he had been a member of Rajoelina's coalition until this year - and could have a decisive impact on the second round depending on which candidate he elects to support.

This list of 13 candidates was selected from a total of 28 applications submitted to the HCC by the 6 September deadline.⁸ The coming weeks are expected to be marked by the successful candidates positioning themselves to secure the endorsements of other influential political figures including the 15 political leaders who did not make it onto the ballot. As such, the period ahead of the formal start of the election campaign on 10 October is expected to be marked by elevated political rhetoric between the candidates, especially regarding Rajoelina's citizenship.

...but election funding remains a concern and highlights dependence on aid

CENI has confirmed that as of 11 September, it is still approximately MGA 15 billion (\$3.32m) short of its required MGA 80 billion (\$17.6m) budget, a point of concern ahead of the election. This \$17.6m budget had already been drastically reduced from the MGA 143 billion (\$31.4m) CENI originally

⁵ 2424, 13 Sep 2023

⁶ Africa News, 13 Sep 2023

⁷ Madagascar Tribune, 11 Sep 2023

⁸ L'Info, 8 Sep 2023

claimed it needed to best organise the election.⁹ Some of this shortfall will be addressed by the candidate fees which will be levied on the 13 successful presidential contenders which are expected to be as high as MGA 200m (\$43,885) per candidate. This should contribute as much as MGA 2.6 billion (\$580,000) to CENI coffers.

The government has pledged to secure the remaining funds; however, given the state of the country's fiscus, this funding will likely need to come from external donors. Madagascar urgently needs this funding as such a shortfall will impact the efficacy of the election increasing the likelihood of administrative and personnel errors which could undermine the legitimacy of the vote itself.

...highlighting dependence on external funding

This electoral funding shortfall has once again highlighted Madagascar's dependence on external funding to finance both government operations and the country's developmental agenda. Further underscoring this fact were other notable recent funding commitments over the past month. Firstly, construction began on the **Saudi Fund for Development (SFD)** funded **Mangoky Bridge** which will connect the **Atsimo-Andrefana** and **Menabe** regions on 20 August.¹⁰ This key infrastructure project is being financed through a \$20m soft loan from SFD and will provide a significant boost to the local economy and ease of transport. The project would not have been feasible without the SFD's funding.

India on 11 September then committed to providing Madagascar with MGA 12.6 billion (\$2.79m) in development financing.¹¹ This agreement was included in a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between foreign affairs minister **Yvette Sylla** and India's ambassador to Madagascar **Bandaru Wilsonbabu**. These funds will primarily be allocated to projects centred on developing infrastructure and the provision of public services.

And in a final example of Madagascar's dependence on external support, on 12 September the German development bank, **KfW**, confirmed that it would provide EUR 28.5m (\$30.6m) towards food security programmes in southern Madagascar.¹² This funding will be provided to the **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)** and the **World Food Program (WFP)**, both of which run projects in the country. Specifically, the funding will go to food security, malnutrition, and resiliency projects in the **Atsimo-Andrefana**, **Androy**, and **Anosy** regions.¹³ Southern Madagascar is chronically food insecure and frequently experiences famine and near-famine conditions. The Malagasy government is heavily dependent on external funding and the capabilities of organisations such as UNICEF and the WFP to prevent a humanitarian disaster from developing in these regions.

Deadly stampede mars the opening of regional games

A stampede ahead of the opening ceremony of the **Indian Ocean Island Games** – a regional multisport tournament comprising Madagascar **Mauritius**, **Seychelles**, **Comoros**, **Mayotte**, **Reunion** and the **Maldives** – killed 13 people and injured 80 others at the **Mahamasina Municipal Stadium** in Antananarivo on 25 August.¹⁴ The stampede was reportedly caused by poor crowd control at the entry points to the stadium leading to crowds pushing and the resulting crush and stampede. This incident has again highlighted the lack of sufficient crowd control and safety measures at major events in Madagascar. Notably, this is the third such deadly event at the Mahamasina Municipal Stadium in the past five years; one person was killed and 37 injured in a stampede ahead of a football match on 8 September 2018, and 16 people were killed and 101 injured on 26 June 2019 before an Independence Day concert.¹⁵

⁹ Midi Madagasikara, 7 Jul 2023

¹⁰ Arab News, 20 Aug, 2023

¹¹ Orange, 11 Sep 2023

¹² Madagascar Tribune, 13 Sep 2023

¹³ L'Express, 13 Sep 2023

¹⁴ Reuters, 26 Aug 2023

¹⁵ The Independent, 9 Sep 2018

This deadly incident ahead of a high-profile international event when there was pressure on the state to ensure safety measures is concerning. It is particularly troubling given that dozens of crowded events and rallies are anticipated in the upcoming presidential election campaign period. The lack of sufficient policing and crowd control measures combined with the elevated political sentiment which accompanies Malagasy elections does indicate an elevated risk of similar safety incidents and trigger points for civil unrest.

Planner

9 Nov 2023 (**Madagascar**) Presidential election (first round);
20 Dec 2023 (**Madagascar**) Presidential election (second round);

Chronology

13 Sep 2023 **Busan (South Korea)** *Orange*. Economy and finance minister **Rindra Hasimbelo Rabarinirinarison** attends the **7th Korea-Africa Economic Cooperation (KOAPEC) Ministerial Conference**;

13 Sep 2023 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Madagascar Tribune*. The **Union of Teacher-Researchers and Research-Teachers of Higher Education**, which is currently on strike, issues a new letter of demand to the education ministry demanding that its members' unpaid salary arrears be settled by 10 October;

12 Sep 2023 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Madagascar Tribune*. A team from **Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante (CENI)** (electoral commission) arrive in South Africa to oversee the printing and transport of the ballot papers for the 9 November presidential election;

12 Sep 2023 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *L'Express*. A fire destroys 20 houses in Antananarivo's **Ampefiloha Ambodirano** neighbourhood;

9 Sep 2023 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *2424*. General **Jean Yves Rasolondraibe** is appointed as the new chief of staff in the presidency replacing interim chief of staff, presidential spokesperson **Lova Hasinirina Ranoromaro**, who in turn was moved to the role on 24 August after the previous incumbent **Romy Voos Andrianarisoa** was arrested by **United Kingdom** authorities on 12 August on charges of corruption;

9 Sep 2023 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *L'Express*. President **Andry Rajoelina** inaugurates the reopening of the RN44 roadway. The rehabilitation of this key road – which is the main highway through the **Alaotra-Mangoro region** – was a key infrastructure project of his administration;

8 Sep 2023 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Reuters*. Former presidency chief of staff **Romy Andrianarisoa** pleads not guilty to charges she attempted to solicit a bribe from a **United Kingdom**-based **Gemfields**;

4 Sep 2023 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *L'Express*. President **Andry Rajoelina**'s **Tanora Malagasy Vonona (TGV)** party begins its three-day national conference at Antananarivo's **Ivato International Conference Centre**;

3 Sep 2023 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *RFI*. **Jean-Brunelle Razafintsindraofa**, the member of parliament for **Ikongo (Fitovinany Region)**, announces his candidacy for the presidential election;

31 Aug 2023 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Madagascar Tribune*. **Siteny Randrianasoloniaiko**, the member of parliament for **Toliara (Atsimo-Andrefana Region)** and president of the **African Judo Federation**, officially announces that he will contest the presidential election;

26 Aug 2023 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *RFI*. Former president **Hery Rajaonarimampianina** is nominated by his party, the **Hery Vaovao ho an'i Madagasikara (HVM)**, as its presidential candidate;

25 Aug 2023 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *RFI*. Police clash with protesting students who are demanding the resumption of classes outside of the **University of Antananarivo**;

25 Aug 2023 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *jioi2023*. Madagascar hosts the **Indian Ocean Island Games** in Antananarivo between 25 August and 3 September;

24 Aug 2023 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Madagascar Tribune*. Former president **Marc Ravalomanana** officially files his candidacy papers with the **Haut Cour Constitutionnelle (HCC)** (constitutional court) to contest the 9 November presidential election;

23 Aug 2023 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Rio Tinto*. **Australia**-headquartered mining firm, **Rio Tinto**, renew their long-term partnership in Rio Tinto's **QIT Madagascar Minerals (QMM)** ilmenite mine in **Fort Dauphin (Anosy Region)**;

21 Aug 2023 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *NewsMada*. Officials reveal that the company created to operate Antananarivo's new urban passenger train, **Société d'exploitation du Train Urbain**, will be 75% owned by the national government and 25% owned by the municipal government. The train linking Antananarivo's **Soarano** and **Amoronankona** districts is expected to be operational before the end of the year;

17 Aug 2023 **Vatican City (Vatican City)**. President **Andry Rajoelina** meets with **Pope Francis** at the Vatican;

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