

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

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Madagascar Summary 12 January 2022

An Antananarivo criminal court convicts six individuals of plotting the assassination of President Andry Rajoelina (2019-present) in 2021. The World Bank imposes a schedule of sanctions and debarments against construction companies and management companies involved in the Madagascar Airports Project, which has seen the inauguration of a new 17,500-m² terminal at Ivato International Airport. State-owned electricity supplier JIRAMA implements a new programme of load-shedding following a fire at the Andekaleka hydroelectric power station that caused power cuts in Antananarivo. Justice minister Herilaza Imbiki leads a delegation to the Comoros to discuss the arrest of two Malagasy nationals and seizure of 49 kilogrammes of gold smuggled from Madagascar. The council of ministers implements new restrictions in the regions of Analamanga, Vakinankaratra, and Matsiatra Ambony to tackle rising cases of Covid-19.

Apollo 21 suspects sentenced to hard labour

The **Antananarivo** criminal court has convicted six people accused of plotting to assassinate President **Andry Rajoelina** (2019-present) in July 2021 in what has become known as the “*Apollo 21 Project*”, in reference to documents titled ‘Apollo 21 budget’ that outlined the assassination plot. The Apollo 21 project allegedly comprised four phases: the “*Houston phase*” aimed to destabilise the country through social demonstrations; the second, “*ignition phase*”, involved the assassination or resignation of five political leaders including the head of state, while the third and fourth, “*take-off and orbit phase*”, were not disclosed (see *ARC Briefing Madagascar Aug 2021*).¹

The trial of 20 individuals, including two **French** nationals, began on 6 December² and the court delivered its verdict and sentencing on 17 December. French citizens **Paul Rafanoharana** and **Phillippe François** received the harshest sentences, 20-years and 10-years of hard labour respectively.³ Rafanoharana’s wife, **Andrianandrianina Voahanginomenjanahary Carolle**, convicted of complicity and illegal possession of a weapon, received a sentence of five years’ forced labour.⁴ The court sentenced **Aina Razafindrakoto**, former employee of **Banky Foiben’i Madagasikara (BFM)** (central bank), to 10 years in prison while former prime minister general **Victor Ramahatra** and presidency representative **Randriazanokolona William Yvon** (alias **Sareraka**) each received a five-year suspended prison sentence.⁵

One of Rafanoharana’s defence lawyers, **Maître Willy Razafinjatovo**, described the Apollo 21 trial as a “*procès politique*” (political trial) that never succeeded in presenting evidence against the convicted group.⁶ Fellow defence lawyer **Solo Radson** said the verdict was unexpected and unjust, “*based on an empty case*”.⁷ The defence counsel has moved to appeal the decision.⁸

The defence team is not alone in levying accusations that the Apollo 21 trial is a politically motivated showcase. **South Africa**-based non-profit trust, the **Institute for Security Studies (ISS)**, published an article in August accusing President Rajoelina of directing attention away from the poor socio-

¹ [L’Express de Madagascar](#), 10 Aug 2021

² [Reuters](#), 6 Dec 2021

³ [Madagascar Tribune](#), 18 Dec 2021

⁴ [Madagascar Tribune](#), 18 Dec 2021

⁵ [Madagascar Tribune](#), 18 Dec 2021

⁶ [Madagascar Tribune](#), 18 Dec 2021

⁷ [RFI](#), 17 Dec 2021

⁸ [RFI](#), 17 Dec 2021

economic performance of his presidency.⁹ Poor treatment of the accused and procedural irregularities add further doubt to the highly publicised trial. The convicted have complained of poor treatment and insufficient access to legal defence, and accused Malagasy security services of tampering with evidence and fabricating exhibits (see *ARC Briefing Madagascar December 2021*).¹⁰

President Rajoelina's attempt to project power and direct attention away from poor governance by his administration has not worked in his favour. His failure to deliver on promises including infrastructure, healthcare, socio-economic improvement and agriculture will now return to the spotlight, despite significant attempts to control local media (see *ARC Briefing Madagascar May 2021*). South Africa's former ambassador to Madagascar, **Gert Grobler**, noted:

*"It's not good for Madagascar's image [...] the island has been burdened with a negative image for decades with constant political instability, coups etc."*¹¹

The next presidential primaries are due to be held in November 2023 and local media outlets have begun to speculate who the presidential candidates may be, despite Rajoelina's eligibility for a second term. The **Madagascar Tribune** has named **African Judo Union (AJU)** president **Siteny Thierry Randrianasoloniaiko** and **Roland Ratsiraka**, nephew of former president **Didier Ratsiraka** (1975-1993 & 1997-2002), as potential candidates with an ethnically defined "*non-Merina*"¹² support base.¹³

World Bank sanctions Malagasy construction companies over airport project

The **World Bank** has placed a two-year debarment on Madagascar-based construction company **Colas Madagascar SA** and its subsidiary, **CMBI SNC**, after concluding an investigation into the **International Finance Corporation (IFC)**-financed **Airports Madagascar Project** on 4 January. The World Bank's integrity vice presidency determined that the contract for the concession to run two of Madagascar's airports was improperly won and constituted fraudulent practice:

*"Colas Madagascar S.A. engaged in collusive practices by arranging for improper meetings with government officials between February 4, 2015 and May 4, 2015, during the tender for the 28-year contract for the concession to run the airports. Colas Madagascar S.A. also committed a fraudulent practice by failing to disclose such meetings to the IFC."*¹⁴

The World Bank invested in the construction of a new 17,500-m² terminal of **Ivato International Airport**, which was inaugurated on 16 December.¹⁵ The new terminal was financed by a **Public Private Partnership (PPP)** between the Madagascan government and the **Meridiam Infrastructure Africa Fund (MIA Fund)**, operated by France-based private equity group **Méridiam**.¹⁶ A total of \$226.77m has been invested in the construction of the project to date.¹⁷

The concession collectively holds a contract to maintain and operate the airports for 28 years. The IFC described the concessionaire of Ivato airport and **Fascene** airport as **Ravinala Airports**, a limited liability company registered in Madagascar,

*"to be owned by **Aéroports de Paris Management** (an international airport operator), **Bouygues Bâtiment International** (a construction company with international experience of airport concessions), **Colas** (a construction company with local presence through **Colas Madagascar**), and **Meridiam** (an investor in infrastructure assets with EUR 5 billion [\$5.7 billion] under management)."*¹⁸

⁹ [Institute for Security Studies](#), 6 Aug 2021

¹⁰ [RFL](#), 15 Dec 2021

¹¹ [Institute for Security Studies](#), 6 Aug 2021

¹² Merina (Also known as Imerina Antimerina or Hova) is the largest ethnic group in Madagascar

¹³ [Madagascar Tribune](#), 24 Dec 2021

¹⁴ [World Bank](#), 4 Jan 2022

¹⁵ [Airport Technology](#), 17 Dec 2021

¹⁶ [CDC Group Plc](#), accessed 11 Jan 2022

¹⁷ [Airport Technology](#), 17 Dec 2021

¹⁸ [IFC Disclosures](#), accessed 11 Jan 2022

The debarment of Colas Madagascar SA and CMBI SNC makes them ineligible to participate in projects and operations financed by the World Bank Group for two years. The World Bank also announced a 12-month conditional debarment on France-based international construction firm Bouygues Bâtiment International and its affiliate, **Entreprise Internationale de Construction (EIC)**, for its role in collusion. However, the World Bank noted that both companies remain eligible to participate in projects and operations financed by institutions of the World Bank Group, provided that they comply with the World Bank's obligations under the settlement agreement.

"If the World Bank Group Integrity Compliance Officer determines that these obligations are not satisfied within a 12-month period, the conditional non-debarment will convert to a sanction of debarment with conditional release, and the company and its affiliate will then become ineligible to participate in World Bank Group-financed activities."¹⁹

The World Bank also implemented a 24-month sanction against France-based airport developer, operator and manager **ADP International SA** (formerly **ADP Management**), subsidiary of Aéroports de Paris SA, for its role in collusion under the Madagascar airports project and another World Bank-funded project in **Zagreb (Croatia)**. The sanction on ADP International is a 12-month debarment followed by a 12-month conditional non-debarment affecting multiple subsidiaries including:

- **ADP Ingénierie;**
- **ADP Airport Services;**
- **ADP do Brasil Participações;**
- **ADP International Americas LLC;**
- **ADPM Mauritius;**
- **Aéroports de Paris Management 3;**
- **Airport International Group;**
- **Airport Management Company;**
- **Airport Management Services;**
- **Jordan Airport Management.²⁰**

The sanctions constitute a serious threat to the availability of multinational donor funding to Madagascar, which is in the grip of a humanitarian crisis, extended drought and faltering economic recovery from the **Covid-19** pandemic. Greater regulatory oversight and consequences for bribery and corruption offences may inhibit Madagascar's ability to borrow and deploy loans from multilateral donors. The World Bank committed \$100m on 10 December to protect livelihoods and improve food security in Southern Madagascar.²¹ The \$100m package includes \$50m in **Crisis Response Window Early Financing.**²²

Sanctions such as those implemented by the World Bank on major infrastructure projects in Madagascar will further hamper Rajoelina's ability to deliver and improve his image ahead of the November 2023 polls.

Power cuts in Antananarivo after fire at hydroelectric station

President Rajoelina's programme to improve living standards in Madagascar through a programme of electrification has suffered a further blow after a 30MW transformer caught fire and exploded on 2 January at the **Andekaleka** hydroelectric power station.²³ The incident occurred days after President

¹⁹ [World Bank](#), 4 Jan 2022

²⁰ [World Bank](#), 4 Jan 2022

²¹ [World Bank](#), 10 Dec 2021

²² [World Bank](#), 10 Dec 2021

²³ [Madagascar Tribune](#), 3 Jan 2022

Rajoelina's address to the nation on 31 December, in which he stated his commitment to double Madagascar's energy production capacity during his five-year term.²⁴

The Andekaleka station supplies 40-50% of the energy consumed by capital city Antananarivo through the **Réseau interconnecté électrique d'Antananarivo (RIA)** (Antananarivo interconnected electric network).²⁵ The fire sparked a series of "micro-cuts" and power outages across the city.²⁶ Local media reports and social media posts on **Facebook** initially described the incident as a fire, but later reports detailed an explosion.²⁷ President Rajoelina visited the power plant on 10 January, declaring the incident a criminal act and calling for witnesses to the explosion and fire to come forward.²⁸ Rajoelina has offered a MAD'1-50 million (\$252 – \$12,614) reward for information. During his speech at the site, president Rajoelina claimed to have been offered MGA'40 million (\$10,113) in 2018 by multiple malicious actors to sabotage the plant.

State-owned electric utility and water services company **Jiro sy Rano Malagasy (JIRAMA)** officials confirmed that a second 30MW transformer was knocked off the grid during the fire and will take two weeks to restore.²⁹ JIRAMA has stepped up load-shedding measures in response the incident. Power cuts will rotate through districts of the capital and last no longer than two to three hours.³⁰ President Rajoelina confirmed on 10 January that repairs to the site will take six to eight months.³¹

Justice minister leads delegation to the Comoros

The **Comorian national gendarmerie** (Comoros police service) confirmed the arrest on 28 December of two Madagascan citizens and seizure of 49 kilogrammes of gold bars.³² Three individuals were detained at the **Prince Said Ibrahim Airport in Moroni** (Comoros) after boarding a private jet scheduled to depart for **Dubai (United Arab Emirates)**.³³ The arrests were made nearly one year after the seizure of 73.5 kg of gold being smuggled from Madagascar to Dubai, via South Africa and **Ethiopia**, in January 2021 (see *ARC Briefing Madagascar Jan 2021*).³⁴ Madagascar and South Africa remain in negotiations for the repatriation of both the precious metal seized and those accused in the case.³⁵

Madagascar's justice minister, **Herilaza Imbiki**, departed Madagascar on 11 January, leading a delegation of government and law officials to the Comoros to discuss the extradition of the accused Madagascan citizens and determine the origin of the gold.³⁶ The delegation includes:

- Director general of customs, **Ernest Lainkana Zafivanona**
- Head of Madagascar's **Interpol** office, **Jean Rostand Rabialahy**
- Head of criminal research for the police, **Valona Tahina Ravelomanana**
- Director of judicial affairs, studies and reform at the ministry of justice, **Saholy Norotiana Randrianarisoa**
- Director general of public affairs for the ministry of foreign affairs, **Alice N'Diaye**.³⁷

Moroni court public prosecutor **Ali Momahed Djounaid** confirmed on 8 January that members of the criminal network conducted 11 "*opérations illicites*" (illicit operations) between September and

²⁴ [Madagascar Tribune](#), 3 Jan 2022

²⁵ [Orange](#), 11 Jan 2022

²⁶ [Madagascar Tribune](#), 3 Jan 2022

²⁷ [Madagascar Tribune](#), 11 Jan 2022

²⁸ [Madagascar Tribune](#), 11 Jan 2022

²⁹ [Madagascar Tribune](#), 11 Jan 2022

³⁰ [Madagascar Tribune](#), 3 Jan 2022

³¹ [Madagascar Tribune](#), 11 Jan 2022

³² [Madagascar Tribune](#), 29 Dec 2021

³³ [Madagascar Tribune](#), 29 Dec 2021

³⁴ [Madagascar Tribune](#), 5 Jan 2021

³⁵ [Madagascar Tribune](#), 29 Dec 2021

³⁶ [2424](#), 11 Jan 2022

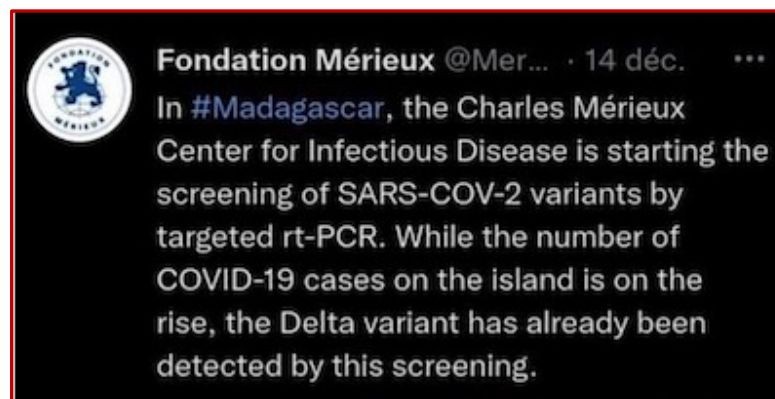
³⁷ [2424](#), 11 Jan 2022

December 2021.³⁸ Djounaid stated, in an interview with Comoros-based newspaper **Al Watwan**, that the gold was smuggled from Madagascar to the Comorian coast of **Anjouan** where it was apprehended at the Moroni airport.³⁹ The gold was transported in a fishing cooler on a speedboat and accompanied by cash intended to bribe officials at the airport before being loaded onto a private jet bound for Dubai, when the Comorian authorities apprehended it.⁴⁰

Covid-19 update

Madagascar's council of ministers implemented new health regulations in the regions of **Analamanga, Vakinankaratra, and Matsiatra Ambony** on 15 December to tackle rising cases of Covid-19. New restrictions include a ban on gatherings of more than 100 persons and mandatory use of facemasks, social distancing and handwashing.⁴¹

Health ministry director general Dr **Rado Razafimahatratra** delivered a press conference on 20 December confirming that the **Delta** and **Omicron** variants of Covid-19 had yet to be detected in Madagascar.⁴² The health ministry also confirmed that Madagascar had only received genomic sequencing laboratory equipment, required to detect Covid-19 variants, in November. Health ministry claims that no Covid-19 variants have been detected in Madagascar contradict a claim published on social media platform **Twitter** by France-based independent laboratory and diagnosis **Mérieux Foundation** on 14 December (see below).⁴³



The Mérieux Foundation later removed its tweet, clarifying on 17 December that:

*"The post [14 December] aimed only to underline the capacity of this method to identify variants and not to pronounce on the presence of potential variants."*⁴⁴

The Delta and Omicron variants of Covid-19 are more transmissible than the **Alpha** and **Beta** strains of the virus and Omicron is reported to be more evasive of vaccine-enabled immunity. Madagascar suspended flights from South Africa on 1 December (see *ARC Briefing Madagascar Dec 2021*), stating a need to protect Madagascar from the Omicron variant. However, air borders with **European** countries, where confirmed cases of Omicron remain high, have remained open.

New cases of Covid-19 continue to rise in Madagascar, with 1,667 new cases of the virus detected on 8 January.⁴⁵ The public health ministry announced 54 new deaths connected to the virus between 1 and 7 January.⁴⁶ A public report delivered by the health ministry on 8 January confirmed that Madagascar

³⁸ [2424](#), 8 Jan 2022

³⁹ [2424](#), 11 Jan 2022

⁴⁰ [2424](#), 8 Jan 2022

⁴¹ [US Embassy in Madagascar](#), 16 Dec 2021

⁴² [Madagascar Tribune](#), 20 Dec 2021

⁴³ [Madagascar Tribune](#), 20 Dec 2021

⁴⁴ [Twitter](#), 17 Dec 2021

⁴⁵ [Johns Hopkins University](#), accessed 11 Jan 2022

⁴⁶ [Madagascar Tribune](#), 10 Jan 2022

currently has 236 individuals experiencing serious symptoms due to the virus.⁴⁷ New cases of Covid-19 are concentrated in the Analamanga and Vakinankaratra regions.

Since the government lifted a 17-month nationwide state of emergency on 3 September (see *ARC Briefing Madagascar September 2021*), new cases of Covid-19 have steadily increased. **World Health Organisation (WHO)** data on Covid-19 indicates that new cases now exceed levels measured in July 2020, during the first wave of infections, but remain shy of the peak of infections experienced in April 2021 during the second wave of infections.⁴⁸ The WHO reported that as of 3 January, Madagascar had recorded 1,667 new cases over a seven-day period and reported 50 deaths in the same period.⁴⁹ As of 11 January, Madagascar had registered a total of 54,101 cases of Covid-19 in its population of 26.97 million, with 1,117 Covid-19-related deaths.⁵⁰

Madagascar joined the WHO vaccination access scheme, **COVAX**, in April after initially opting out of the programme and instead using a local herbal remedy named **Covid-Organics** (see *ARC Briefing Madagascar April 2021*).⁵¹ As of 5 January, 2.95% of the Madagascan population, 817,386 individuals, have received at least one dose of a Covid-19 vaccine, while 2.77% or 767,113 individuals are fully vaccinated.⁵² On 6 January, the **United States (US)** donated a further 409,500 doses of Covid-19 **Pfizer** vaccine through the COVAX initiative.⁵³ The US has donated 1.78 million doses of Covid-19 vaccine to Madagascar since April 2021.⁵⁴

Planner

2023 (**Madagascar**) Potential presidential elections;

Chronology

11 Jan 2022 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** 2424. Justice minister **Herilaza Imbiki** leads a government and law enforcement delegation to the **Comoros** to discuss the recent seizure of 49 kilogrammes of gold bars and two Madagascan citizens accused of smuggling;

11 Jan 2022 **Andekaleka (Madagascar)** *Madagascar Tribune*. President **Andry Rajoelina** visits the **Andekaleka** hydroelectric power station and calls for witnesses to the fire that destroyed a 30MW transformer at the plant, labelling the action a 'criminal act';

6 Jan 2022 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Madagascar Tribune*. President **Andry Rajoelina** hosts the first conseil des ministres (council of ministers) meeting of 2022 at the state palace in **Iavoloha**;

6 Jan 2022 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *African Business*. The **United States (US)** donates 409,500 doses of **Pfizer** Covid-19 vaccine to **Madagascar** through the **World Health Organisation (WHO) COVAX** scheme;

4 Jan 2022 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *World Bank*. The **World Bank Group** announces a two-year debarment for **Madagascar**-based construction company **Colas Madagascar SA** for fraudulent practices deployed whilst working on the **Airports Madagascar Project**, barring Colas Madagascar SA and subsidiary **CMBI SNC** from participating in projects and operations financed by World Bank funding;

3 Jan 2022 **Andekaleka (Madagascar)** *Madagascar Tribune*. A fire destroys a 30MW transformer at the **Andekaleka** hydroelectric power station causing multiple micro-cuts to power supply in **Antananarivo**;

⁴⁷ *Madagascar Tribune*, 10 Jan 2022

⁴⁸ *World Health Organisation*, accessed 11 Jan 2022

⁴⁹ *World Health Organisation*, accessed 11 Jan 2022

⁵⁰ *World Health Organisation*, accessed 11 Jan 2022

⁵¹ *VON*, 1 Apr 2021

⁵² *World Health Organisation*, accessed 11 Jan 2022

⁵³ *African Business*, 6 Jan 2022

⁵⁴ *African Business*, 6 Jan 2022

29 Dec 2021 **Moroni (Comoros)** *Madagascar Tribune*. **Comoros** national police service confirms the interception of 49 kilogrammes of gold and two Madagascan citizens suspected of smuggling gold on 28 December;

29 Dec 2021 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *APO Newsfeed*. **Switzerland** donates CHF900,000 (\$981,440) to support the **United Nations (UN) World Food Programme (WFP)** in Madagascar;

22 Dec 2021 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Komu*. **L'Agence Portuaire Maritime et Fluviale (APMF)** (maritime and river port agency) confirms that 83 people died when an overloaded cargo ship carrying 138 individuals sank off north-eastern Madagascar;

20 Dec 2021 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Travel Agency Central*. **Ivato International Airport**, the main international airport serving capital **Antananarivo**, unveils a new terminal;

17 Dec 2021 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Africanews*. **Malagasy** authorities sentence five people, including two **French** nationals, to prison for planning a coup against President **Andry Rajoelina**;

13 Dec 2021 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Seatrade Maritime News*. **Philippines**-based **International Container Terminal Services Inc (ICTSI)** and Madagascar state-controlled port authority **Société de Gestion du Port Autonome de Toamasina (SPAT)** sign a 15-year extension to the concession for the **Madagascar International Container Terminal**, held by ICTSI's Madagascar-based subsidiary, **Madagascar International Container Terminal Services Ltd**, since 2005;

13 Dec 2021 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Jeune Afrique*. Government awards a 28-year concession for the management and development of **Antananarivo-Ivato airport** to the **Ravinala Airports** consortium in which **France**-based private equity investor **Meridiam** is 45% holder;

11 Dec 2021 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Bloomberg*. **World Bank** allocates **Madagascar** \$100m to support efforts to combat famine;

10 Dec 2021 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *2424*. President **Andry Rajoelina** announces the intention to construct the **Antananarivo-Toamasina** highway at a launch party for the second phase of construction work at **Port Toamasina**;

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