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The ruling Isika Rehetra Miaraka amin'i Andry Rajoelina (IRD) coalition loses its majority in the Assemblée Nationale (national assembly) following the 29 May legislative election. President Andry Rajoelina (2019-present) attends the Korea-Africa Summit on 4 and 5 June during which he secures two bilateral agreements focusing on critical minerals and migrant workers. Police kill three suspected gang members in a shootout in the town of Ambohimangakely in the Analamanga Region on 18 May, highlighting the risk of crime in Madagascar.

Ruling coalition loses its majority in legislative elections

In an unexpected development, the ruling **Isika Rehetra Miaraka amin'i Andry Rajoelina (IRD)** coalition lost its majority in the **Assemblée Nationale** (national assembly) following the 29 May legislative election.¹ The **Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante (CENI)** (electoral commission) reported in the provisional results, released on 11 June, that the IRD only won 80 of the 163 seats in the national assembly. As such, the IRD will need to secure the support of at least two other deputies in the national assembly to pass any legislation or approve the council of ministers. As per CENI's interim results:

- IRD won 80 seats;
- Main opposition coalition **Firaisankina Platform** won 22 seats;
- Opposition **Kôlekitifa an'i Malagasy (Kôlekitifa)** won one seat;
- Opposition **Fiovana Ivoaran'ny Eny Ifotony (FIVOI)** won four seats.

Notably, independent candidates did surprisingly well this election winning 55 seats. This indicates a growing appetite within the electorate for political alternatives. These results also should be interpreted as reflective of the IDR and President **Andry Rajoelina's** (2019-present) poor performance. Rajoelina's coalition not only lost its majority but did so in an election in which it was widely expected to win by a commanding margin and actually increase its presence in the national assembly. This was especially the case given that the IRD contested more constituencies than any of the other opposition coalitions.

However, the election results will not have a meaningful impact on the balance of power in Madagascar. Rajoelina and the IRD continue to control the executive and the senate and will only need to convince a small number of independents to support them to ensure control of the national assembly. This is unlikely to pose a challenge to the sitting president but will likely ensure that Rajoelina invests effort into the 2025/2026 senate elections to ensure that he retains his control of the upper legislative house as well.

Elections marked by elevated tensions and low turnout

It should be noted that the election day itself concluded without any major incidents; this is significant given that the build-up to the national assembly election was marked by elevated political tensions. Indicative of this was the statements former president **Marc Ravalomanana (2002-2009)** – the leader of the **Tiako I Madagasikara (TIM)** party, the largest member of the Firaisankina Platform – made on 21 May alleging that the Malagasy government had frequently breached the country's electoral laws during the campaign.²

¹ 2424, 11 Jun 2024

² Midi Madagasikara, 22 May 2024

Ravalomanana alleged that Rajoelina was abusing his position and had used the office of the presidency to campaign for the IRD. Specifically, the former president cited the government's decision to hold several high-profile events unveiling projects and initiatives during the election campaign period. This was the latest statement by Ravalomanana who, in April, raised concerns about the arrest of TIM member and Firaisankina Platform candidate for **Antsirabe I** constituency, **Olga Ramalason**.³

Yet, despite the tense environment during the campaign period, the election was marked by a very low voter turnout. CENI's final figures indicate only 47.74% of registered voters cast their ballots in the election.⁴ This was only marginally better than the 46.36% who voted in the November 2023 presidential election. This low turnout should be of concern to Malagasy lawmakers as it suggests that the majority of the country's eligible voters have opted out of the political system.

Although the election day itself concluded without major incident, the post-election period has witnessed a noticeable increase in tensions and unrest. Protesters set the local CENI office in **Tsihombe (Androy Region)** on fire on 1 June after rumours circulated in the area of potential electoral fraud.⁵

In another concerning incident in Tsihombe, gendarmerie arrested independent candidate **Marie Jeanne d'Arc Masy Goulamaly** on 31 May after she publicly denounced alleged electoral irregularities.⁶ **United Kingdom**-headquartered **Amnesty International** released a statement on 7 June condemning Goulamaly's arrest and calling on authorities to release her at once.

Further incidents of unrest are possible in the coming days as the **Haut Cour Constitutionnelle (HCC)** (constitutional court) authenticates the results and hears any electoral disputes. Under Malagasy law, the election is only certified once the HCC declares the final result after attending to any disputes. As per the current election schedule, the HCC is expected to issue the final election results before Madagascar's **Independence Day** holiday on 26 June.⁷

According to the HCC, over 100 requests have been filed. These include direct challenges to the results as well as lesser issues.⁸ Notably, all of the major political coalitions including the IRD and the Firaisankina Platform have submitted challenges to various elections. The fact that Madagascar's national assembly elections are run on a constituency system has added additional levels of complexity as most challenges refer to specific constituency races.

The large number of challenges that have been filed have further increased the likelihood that the HCC's final results announcement will be rejected and there is a threat of protests following this announcement. This threat of unrest will be elevated if the HCC does overturn any of the election results, especially if such a ruling restores the IRD's majority in the national assembly.

However, the low voter turnout and the subdued protests following the contested presidential election in November suggest that the majority of Malagasy citizens have deep fatigue over the country's contentious politics. As such, any further post-election unrest will likely be short-lived.

Rajoelina secures bilateral agreements with South Korea summit

Highlighting Rajoelina's lack of concern about the elections, the president left Madagascar soon after the election to attend the **Korea-Africa Summit** which took place in **Seoul (South Korea)** on 4 and 5 June.⁹

This summit was a general success for Rajoelina as he managed to secure potentially lucrative agreements with South Korea. The first agreement was a three-year memorandum of understanding

³ Midi Madagasikara, 24 Apr 2024

⁴ 2424, 16 Jun 2024

⁵ Midi Madagasikara, 1 Jun 2024

⁶ Amnesty International, 7 Jun 2024

⁷ Madagascar Tribune, 11 Jun 2024

⁸ L'Express, 11 Jun 2024

⁹ Reuters, 5 Jun 2024

(MoU) for the prospecting of critical minerals in Madagascar.¹⁰ Under the agreement, Madagascar will allow South Korean firms prospecting rights to explore for and develop critical mineral reserves in the country. Madagascar is believed to have substantial levels of untapped reserves of graphite, nickel, cobalt, and chrome. These minerals and metals are key for the manufacturing of vital technologies and the batteries required for the global energy transition.

The growing importance of such critical minerals has led to increased investor interest in Madagascar, especially since current leading producers such as **China** have begun to limit the export of such essential minerals. South Korea is a major technology and vehicle manufacturer and, as such, needs access to such minerals and views Madagascar as a potentially valuable partner in this sector. For Madagascar, this agreement could lead to increased South Korean investment in its mining and minerals sector which will help diversify its investor and export partner base.

The second bilateral agreement was an MoU allowing an increase in migrant workers from Madagascar to South Korea.¹¹ Under this agreement, up to 1,000 Malagasy workers a year will be granted South Korean work permits. Such migrant labour is common in Madagascar where many workers seek opportunities abroad typically in the domestic work and construction sectors. The remittances from such migrant workers have become an important source of foreign exchange and income for Madagascar's economy.

However, many of these individuals source work in the **Middle East** where frequent reports of abuse and human trafficking are reported. As such, in 2015, Madagascar banned its citizens from seeking such work in several Middle Eastern countries.¹² This new agreement with South Korea will provide access to similar opportunities in a country with a better human and labour rights record while still allowing the flow of remittances to Madagascar.

Deadly shootout between police and criminal gang in Analamanga Region

At least three suspected criminals were killed in a shootout with Malagasy police in the town of **Ambohimangakely** in the **Analamanga** region on 18 May.¹³ As per official statements, local investigators arrested a suspected robber on 15 May shortly after a break-in was reported. This individual was believed to belong to a local gang known as the 'Wrong Turn' and was convinced to reveal the location of his fellow gang members. On 18 May, police located the gang and attempted to arrest them leading to the shootout and the deaths of three of the gang members.

This incident serves as a reminder of the high risk of crime in Madagascar including violent crime. The most significant vector of this crime are armed gangs which operate across most of the country. Bandit gangs (known locally as dahalo) are the most serious criminal threat in the country and predominantly operate in rural areas targeting isolated farmsteads, small mines, and vehicles travelling on rural roads. Dahalo gangs are also behind the rise in kidnapping incidents in Madagascar.

However, the shootout with the gang in Ambohimangakely underscores the persistent threat from more conventional urban-based gangs as well. These criminal organisations are responsible for the high crime rate in Madagascar's cities and are known to commit armed robbery, burglaries, and murders.

Planner

26 Jun 2024 **Madagascar** Independence Day

16 Oct 2024 **Madagascar** municipal elections (anticipated);

Chronology

¹⁰ L'Express, 5 Jun 2024

¹¹ Midi Madagasikara, 5 Jun 2024

¹² Africa News, 12 Jun 2016

¹³ L'Express, 23 May 2024

14 Jun 2024 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Midi Madagasikara*. Foreign affairs minister **Rasata Rafaravavita** signs two bilateral agreements with her Moroccan counterpart, **Nasser Bourita** focussed on the health and diplomatic sectors;

13 Jun 2024 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Mining Weekly*. **Canada**-headquartered **NextSource Materials** announces the signing of a mandate letter with the **International Finance Corporation (IFC)** to fund the expansion of its **Molo** graphite mine in Madagascar;

13 Jun 2024 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Midi Madagasikara*. Council of ministers approves the recruitment of an additional 1,500 gendarmerie officers;

12 Jun 2024 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *L'Express*. Municipal sanitation workers in Antananarivo embark on a strike over unpaid salary arrears;

12 Jun 2024 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Orange*. The **Locust Control Centre** reveals that there is a possible locust infestation impacting approximately 270,000 hectares of land across the **Atsimo-Andrefana, Ihorombe, Haute Matsiatra, Menabe, and Amoron'i Mania** regions;

9 Jun 2024 **Dubai (UAE)** *Business Traveller*. **Dubai**-based airline **Emirates** announces that it will launch a flight to Antananarivo commencing on 3 September 2024;

4 Jun 2024 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *L'Express*. Officials confirm that the annual **Independence Day** parade will take place as planned on 26 June;

3 Jun 2024 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *WCN*. **United Arab Emirates (UAE)**-headquartered **AD Ports Group** and **Economic Development Board of Madagascar** sign an agreement to enhance commercial opportunities in the maritime sector, industry and logistics;

31 May 2024 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *L'Express*. At least one person is killed, and four houses destroyed in suspected intercommunal violence in **Ankisatra, Melaky** region;

28 May 2024 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *L'Express*. A soldier is severely wounded after being attacked by a lynch mob in **Andranovao**;

27 May 2024 **Windhoek (Namibia)** *The Namibian*. Namibia sends an observation mission to **South Africa** ahead of its general election and to **Madagascar** ahead of its legislative elections, both of which take place on 29 May;

16 May 2024 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *L'Express*. Bandits kidnap three people in the **Analamanga** region's **Ankazobe** municipality.

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