

## AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

### Madagascar Monthly Briefing January 2026

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#### Madagascar Summary 27 January 2026

*The Haute Cour Constitutionnelle (HCC) (high constitutional court) rules that Madagascar's upper legislative house, the Sénat (senate), must be disbanded following the end of its term, despite the fact that last year's senate elections were indefinitely postponed. As part of the ongoing crackdown on the previous regime, prosecutors place former senate president Richard Ravlomanana and former education minister Marie Michelle Sahondraharihalala in pre-trial detention. Madagascar enhances security ties with Russia as the latter donates weapons and deploys military instructors to Madagascar. Similarly, France commits to strengthening ties with Madagascar in a clear effort to retain French influence in the country. Health officials confirms an mpox outbreak.*

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#### HCC rules to disband the senate

The **Haute Cour Constitutionnelle (HCC)** (high constitutional court) [ruled](#) on 19 January that **Madagascar's** upper legislative house, the **Sénat** (senate), must be disbanded following the end of its constitutional five-year term on 18 January. The HCC needed to adjudicate this matter as a new senate has not been elected since the December 2025 senate elections were indefinitely postponed following the October 2025 military coup that brought President **Michael Randrianirina** (2025-present) and the current administration to power.

In its ruling, the HCC affirmed that electoral terms are inviolable under Malagasy law. The senate had been elected in December 2020 and sworn in in January 2021. The HCC did address concerns regarding the disbandment of the Senate and found that the lower house of parliament, the **Assemblée Nationale** (national assembly), would assume full legislative responsibility for the time being; this has effectively turned Madagascar's legislature from a bicameral institution to a unicameral one. The current national assembly was sworn in in June 2024 and its term will last until June 2029. This should ensure that its term will only end after the government's reformation process is completed and fresh elections are held. At present, Randrianirina is publicly committed to holding fresh elections in 2027/28.

The HCC's ruling that the legislature can function without the senate raises the question of whether the upper house is even necessary. Randrianirina and his so-called 'government of the reformation' have pledged to reform Madagascar's constitution which will include structural reforms to the country's government and elections. It is possible that the senate may be eliminated during this process, especially given that some policymakers have advocated for the body's dissolution for several years.

The HCC's ruling upholding the senate's disbandment will strengthen Randrianirina's position, given that the new president appears to have strong control over the national assembly. Under Madagascar's existing constitution, the sitting president appoints six of the 18 senators – the remaining 12 are elected. As such, the senate had been dominated by loyalists of former president **Andry Rajoelina** (2019-2025), whom Randrianirina deposed in the October 2025 coup. Had the HCC extended the senate's term, it would have helped perpetuate Rajoelina's remaining influence and set up a potential confrontation between the legislature and the new military-led government.

Notably, the HCC ruled to disband the senate shortly after Randrianirina [replaced](#) three of the court's justices. Officially, the three judges submitted their resignations on 22 December, which Randrianirina accepted, before he appointed three new justices. However, the three departing judges

publicly [denied](#) that they had resigned and claimed that due process to remove them had not been followed. Despite these protestations, the judges have been sidelined, and their replacements assumed their positions.

This development underscores the extent to which the new government has established control over the Malagasy state. This marks a clear breach of the separation of powers and confirms that Randrianirina does not consider himself bound by Madagascar's previous constitutional laws and norms. This is unsurprising given that shortly after he took power, Randrianirina threatened to dissolve the HCC, which was only spared after it formally recognised him as Madagascar's president (*see ARC Brief Madagascar Nov 2025*).

### Former regime officials placed in pre-trial detention

Dismantling Rajoelina's remaining influence in Madagascar and targeting key figures from Rajoelina's administration is one of the new government's main priorities. In a major development related to this, prosecutors [placed](#) former senate president **Richard Ravlomanana** and former education minister **Marie Michelle Sahondraharmalala** in pre-trial detention on 19 December.

Ravalomanana (no relation to former president **Marc Ravalomanana** (2002-2009)) was one of the most visible figures of the Rajoelina government and was one of the former president's closest allies. Prior to his appointment as senate president, Ravalomanana served as Rajoelina's national security advisor and played a leading role in the military putsch that first brought Rajoelina to power in 2009.

Ravalomanana, who [was first arrested](#) on 27 December 2025, is facing numerous charges related to the state's heavy-handed response to the September/October unrest that preceded the coup. These charges include 'complicity in homicide' for giving orders for security forces to use excessive force. Sahondraharmalala is also facing charges related to last year's unrest, including inciting public disorder and distributing money for the purpose of corruption.

Ravalomanana and Sahondraharmalala are arguably the most senior figures associated with the former Rajoelina government police have arrested. Their respective trials will be symbolic of the new government's efforts to punitively target the previous regime. These charges are also motivated by the new government's need to be seen to be acting over the state's response to the unrest. Such prosecutions are needed to placate the youth-led activist groups, which led the unrest and have been calling for former regime officials to be held accountable for the violence. Randrianirina's government need to act against these former officials to ensure that they retain the support of these groups and avoid demonstrations over the matter.

### Madagascar enhances security cooperation with Russia

Among the most noteworthy developments under Randrianirina is Madagascar's openness to improving its bilateral relations with **Russia**. In a significant illustration of this, the presidency [confirmed](#) on 14 January that Russian military trainers were in the country providing training to Malagasy forces. This announcement came after national assembly speaker **Siteny Randrianasoloniako** [revealed](#) on 20 December that a Russian aircraft had delivered military equipment to Madagascar. Randrianasoloniako noted this shipment included assault rifles, sniper rifles and anti-tank rocket systems, which were delivered to the presidential guard. It should be noted that Randrianasoloniako is a pro-Russia politician who is one of the most influential advocates for enhanced Malagasy-Russia relations.

The instructors are likely in the country to provide training to local security forces in the use of the weapons that were delivered on 20 December. This equipment will bolster the military's capacity and will likely be utilised by the presidential guard and the special forces that are currently combating bandit gangs in Madagascar's rural areas.

Russia has used military cooperation to expand its influence in Africa in recent years, especially in **Francophone Africa**. This has frequently come at the expense of **France**, which was historically the most influential foreign power in these countries. This latest development indicates that Russia is

keen to strengthen its ties with Madagascar and views the ascent of a military-led government after the October 2025 coup as a key opportunity for it to do so. As yet, Russia is unlikely to displace French influence in Madagascar, especially given that Madagascar currently does not have defence issues that require such military cooperation. However, the presence of these Russian trainers in Madagascar does confirm that the rivalry between France and Russia has firmly expanded into Madagascar, which will be a concern for the French government.

This concern was likely a key factor in the recent diplomatic push by France to affirm ties to Madagascar's new government. Most notably, Madagascar's foreign minister **Christine Razanamahasoa** [met](#) with her French counterpart **Jean-Noël Barrot** in **Paris** (France) on 19 January. Barrot affirmed France's commitment to strengthening diplomatic ties, and the two ministers announced that they were working on drafting a new partnership framework agreement for Franco-Malagasy relations. This confirms that France intends to proceed with its diplomatic push in Madagascar despite the October 2025 coup. The new partnership framework will build on the commitments made during French President **Emmanuel Macron's** (2017-present) state visit to Madagascar in April 2025 (*see ARC Briefing Madagascar May 2025*). This will include upholding France's commitments to increase development assistance and investment, including the planned investments in Madagascar's energy sector. This is promising for the new government as stronger ties with a major power like France will lend greater legitimacy to the Randrianirina government, especially within the **European Union (EU)**.

### Mpox outbreak in several regions

Health officials [announced](#) on 30 December that they had confirmed an outbreak of mpox in **Mahajanga (Boeny Region)** and had begun track and tracing exercises in an effort to contain the outbreak. Despite these efforts, officials [revealed](#) two weeks later, on 14 January, that the number of confirmed cases had increased to 44, with 222 suspected cases reported. As per the official data, confirmed or suspected mpox infections were identified in 17 of Madagascar's regions, including **Alaotra-Mangoro, Analamanga, Anosy, Atsimo Andrefana, Atsimo Atsinanana, Betsiboka, Bongolava, Diana, Fitovinany, Haute Matsiatra, Melaky, Menabe, Sava, Sofia, Vakinankaratra, and Vatovavy**.

Mpox is an infectious disease caused by the monkeypox virus that is spread primarily through close skin-to-skin contact. Symptoms of the disease include a painful rash, blisters, fever, and swollen lymph nodes. Severe infections are known to be fatal. The rapid spread of the disease underscores Madagascar's limited capacity to address major public health challenges. As such, the outbreak is expected to worsen in the coming weeks, especially in densely populated areas such as Antananarivo. If the outbreak worsens further, Madagascar will likely be subject to adverse travel recommendations. Any travellers returning from Madagascar may also be subject to increased health screening.

### Planner

Feb 2026 **(Madagascar) International Monetary Fund (IMF)** to conduct a review of the **Extended Credit Facility (ECF)** arrangement with Madagascar;

### Chronology

26 Jan 2026 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *L'Express*. A military conference is held at the **Ivato International Conference Centre** in Antananarivo to discuss the possible reform and restructuring of the armed forces;

24 Jan 2026 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Volcano Discovery*. A 5.1 magnitude earthquake is recorded in the **Itasy Region**, but no casualties or structural damage resulting from the quake are reported;

23 Jan 2026 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *S&P Global*. **United States (US)**-headquartered credit rating agency, **S&P Global**, affirms its 'B-/B' rating for Madagascar's long and short-term

sovereign credit and removes Madagascar from its **CreditWatch**, indicating that S&P Global believes that the political and economic situation in the country has stabilised;

16 Jan 2026 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *Midi Madagasikara*. President **Michael Randrianirina** meets with his South African counterpart, President **Cyril Ramaphosa** in Pretoria;

15 Jan 2026 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *L'Express*. An **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** technical team concludes its mission to Madagascar, which formed part of the preparations for the upcoming review of the IMF's **Extended Credit Facility (ECF)** arrangement with Madagascar;

15 Jan 2026 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Madagascar Tribune*. The government appoints General **Hajatiana Rasolomanana** as the new head of the state-owned power and water utility **Jirama**;

15 Jan 2026 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *L'Express*. Finance minister **Herinjatovo Aimé Ramiarison** claims that Madagascar's economy could grow by as much as 6% in 2026 due to the ongoing economic reforms;

12 Jan 2026 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *L'Express*. The **Bureau national de gestion des risques de catastrophes (BNGRC)** (national office for disaster risk management) reports that at least 16 people died due to severe inclement weather, including flooding, in the **Analamanga, Menabe, Atsimo-Andrefana, and Ihorombe** regions;

8 Jan 2026 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Midi-Madagasikara*. The Council of Ministers makes 100 new appointments to the civil service in the latest development in the administration's ongoing effort to overhaul the government;

8 Jan 2026 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Midi-Madagasikara*. The **Tiako I Madagasikara (TIM)** political party stages a rally in Antananarivo;

8 Jan 2026 **Denver (United States)** *Energy Fuels*. The United States (US)-headquartered mining firm, **Energy Fuels**, announces that it has renamed its mineral sands project in Madagascar's **Atsimo-Andrefana Region** from **Base Toliara** to **Vara Mada**;

30 Dec 2025 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *L'Express*. Health officials confirm they are investigating two possible deaths from pneumonic plague in the **Amoron'i Mania Region**;

15 Dec 2025 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *L'Express*. A delegation from the **United Nations (UN)** secretary general's office conducts an assessment mission to Madagascar.

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