

MONTHLY UPDATE

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MADAGASCAR



MAIN STORIES

Protests, Threats and
Counter-Threats

Discontent in
Government Circles

Rahajason's Troubles

Gold Smuggling
Saga

Humanitarian
Situation

HIGHLIGHTS

- The Rodoben'ny Mpanohitra hoan'ny Demokrasia eto Madagasikara (RMDM) opposition coalition organised a peaceful demonstration on 6 February 2021 against corruption, the ineffective measures against Covid-19 and worsening living conditions. About 5 000 people gathered in Imerinkasinina, a village an hour's drive from, Antananarivo. It was the first time that the opposition has gathered so many members in one place since the election of Andry Rajoelina as president.
- The opposition has requested permission from the police to hold another demonstration on 20 February 2021 in the Ambohijatovo neighbourhood in Antananarivo. Ambohijatovo has not hosted any political demonstration since 2009, when Rajoelina started his protests against former president Marc Ravalomanana.
- Since February 5, Ravalomanana's MBS channel, which served as the base for the 'Miara-manonja' programme, where opposition leaders criticised the government, can no longer broadcast on satellite. MBS is accused of having 'incited an insurrection'.
- The President of the National Assembly, Christine Razanamahasoa, warned Members of Parliament (MPs) that comments made outside parliamentary activities, i.e. during public meetings or in the media, are not covered by parliamentary immunity, and therefore liable to prosecution in the courts. She specifically referred to allegations that US\$8 billion from the terrorist group Al-Qaeda would be used to finance the Emergence Madagascar Program.
- Ravalomanana's Tiako i Madagasikara (TIM) is reportedly trying to initiate a process within the Army and the National Gendarmerie to encourage them to support TIM.

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- The new president of the Senate, Herimanana Razafimahefa, said that parliamentary inquiries would not be a priority of the new Senate. Therefore, the inquiries launched by the previous Senate will not be pursued.
- The High Constitutional Court (HCC) ruled that the Senate president will have a 'cabinet' of 34 members, the same as the previous Senate president instead of 41 as initially requested. However, in total, the Senate still has 187 advisers, parliamentary assistants and other support personnel.
- Even though his appeal against his recent prison sentence is still underway in Madagascar, former Minister of Communication and journalist Harry Rahajason (aka Rolly Mercia), who cooperated with a French investigation into the activities of Rajoelina's advisor, the businessman Maminaina Ravatomanga, has asked the United Nations Human Rights Committee to take up his case.
- The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU's) 2020 Democracy Index ranks Madagascar 84 out of 165 countries (1=best; 165=worst) with a score of 5.70 (1=worst; 10=best), up from 5.64 in 2019, putting it in the category of a 'Hybrid Regime'.
- Herman Rakotomalala, the vice president of the National Election Observatory (KMF/CNOE) was arrested and released without charges for posting a message critical of government on social media.
- South African authorities arrested three suspected smugglers after finding 73.5 kilograms of gold bars worth about \$4.5 million in their hand luggage. The consignment is rumoured to be part of an intricate smuggling network using South Africa as a transit route before the gold is dispatched to Dubai or Singapore. In February 2021, Madagascar said that Parpia Gold and Jewels Trading, LLC of the Parpia Group, based in Dubai is claiming the 73.5 kg of gold intercepted in South Africa.
- Madagascar is ranked 149 out of 180 countries in Transparency International's 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI: 1=clean; 180=highly corrupt).

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- According to the Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS) report dated 9 February 2021, for the January–April 2021 period, the number of people facing acute food insecurity in the five southern coastal regions is estimated at 1.35 million. This is about 85 percent more than the number estimated in the corresponding period of 2020.
- As of 17 February 2021, Madagascar had 19 598 confirmed coronavirus cases, 18 915 recoveries and 292 deaths.
- Amnesty International said in a new report that on 2 July 2019 authorities launched a free helpline for victims of gender-based violence. The helpline has received more calls than ever during lockdown; the number of victims calling has increased fivefold.
- International Monetary Fund (IMF) staff completed policy discussions with the authorities on a new medium-term programme that could be supported by IMF resources of about \$320 million under the Extended Credit Facility (ECF).
- The implementation of the Madagascar Emergence Plan (PEM) is slow in coming. The launch date has now been set for June 2021.
- Japan's Sumitomo Corp will book an additional impairment loss of about 30 billion yen on its Ambatovy nickel project in Madagascar for the October to December 2020 quarter.
- To help reduce child labour, the United States (US) Department of Labour announced the award of a \$4.5 million cooperative agreement with the United Nations Development Programme.
- US Ambassador Michael Pelletier announced a new \$4 million programme to support Madagascar's Court of Accounts to implement their 2020–2025 strategic plan.
- Madagascar's Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Environment, Ecology and Forests signed a landmark agreement with the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), unlocking up to \$50 million for efforts to reduce carbon emissions from deforestation and forest degradation between 2020 and 2024.

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- Madagascar was re-elected for a 2nd term to the African Union (AU) Advisory Council on Corruption.
- Roindefo Monja, former head of Rajoelina's transition government, has become head of a new company, the Madagascar FTA Investment Development Joint Stock Company, which aims to promote trade between Madagascar and China.



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