



COUNTRY PROFILE

FOR INFORMATION

MADAGASCAR

Country Information

- Historical Background¹
 - Madagascar became a French colony in 1896, gaining independence in 1960. Since independence Madagascar has undergone various constitutional reforms and ruling types, and only became classified as a true constitutional democracy in 1992 with free presidential and National Assembly elections. Since open elections the country has shifted from one political leader to another, with the 2001 presidential election being contested and nearly leading to secession of half the country. In 2009 civil unrest over the political system under President Marc Ravalomanana led to his resignation and the transference of political control to Andry Rajoelina of the Madagascar Military, in what was effectively a coup d'état. Since the instability caused by the 2009 transference of power Madagascar underwent a period of mediation with the aid of the Southern African Development Community, holding UN supported presidential and parliamentary elections in 2013. Hery Rahaonarimanpianina, former de facto finance minister, won the presidential elections and was inaugurated in January of 2014.
- Geography: Total: 587,041 square km (581,540 Land, 5,501 Water)
 - Climate type: Tropical along coast, temperate inland, arid in south.
 - Terrain: Narrow coastal plain, high plateau and mountains in center.
 - Resources: Graphite, chromite, coal, bauxite, rare earth elements, salt, quartz, tar sands, semiprecious stones, mica, fish, hydropower.
 - Strategic importance: Island located along the eastern coastline of Africa and located along important maritime trading routes.
- Government: Constitutional Democracy
 - Executive Branch; President Hery Martial Rajaonarimampianina, Prime Minister Jean Ravelonarivo.
 - Legislative Branch; 151 seats, 87 members directly elected in single-seat constituencies by simple majority vote and 64 directly elected in two-seat constituencies by proportional representation vote; members serve 4-year terms)
 - Political Parties and Leaders;
 - AVANA Party (Jean-Louis Robinson)
 - Economic Liberalism and Democratic Action for National Recovery – LEADER Fanilo or LF (Manasse Esoavelomandroso)

¹ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ma.html>

- Green Party/Parti Vert or AMHM (Sarah Georget Rabeharisoa)
- National Unity, Freedom, and Development or FFF (Andriamparany Benjamin Radavidson)
- New Force for Madagascar or FIDIO (Hery Rajaonarimampianina)
- Parti Hiaraka Isika or PHI (Albert Camille Vital)
- Party of Andry Rajoelina or MPAR (Andry Rajoelina)
- Pillar of Madagascar or AIM (Andry Rakotovao)
- Ravlomanana Movement or MR (Marc Ravalomanana)
- Sambo Fiaran'I Noe or SFN
- Union Party or Tambatra (Pety Rakotoniaina)
- Vondrona Politika Miara dia Malagasy Miara Miainga or VPM MMM (Milavonjy Andriasy)
- Judicial Branch;
 - Highest Court; Supreme Court or Cour Supreme (11 members; addresses judicial administration issues only); High Constitutional Court or Haute Cour Constitutionnelle (9 members); note – the judiciary includes a High Court of Justice responsible for adjudicating crimes and misdemeanors by government officials including the president.
 - Selection Process: Supreme Court members are elected by the president and judiciary officials, serving a single renewable term of 3 years. High Constitutional Court member's appointment process: 3 each by the president, the two legislative bodies, and by the Council of Magistrates for a single 6 year term.
 - Lower Courts: Court of Appeal and both provincial and city tribunals.
- Population: 23,201,926 (2014 estimate)
 - Labour Force: 12.15 million (2014 estimate)
 - 3.6% unemployment rate (2012 estimate)
 - Population below the poverty line: 72% (2014 estimate)
- Economy
 - Madagascar transitioned from a socialist oriented economy to a World Bank and IMF led policy economy of privatization and liberalization. The economy was slow to grow, especially with government failures to adhere to African regional requirements that alienated potential export markets. Currently agriculture, including fishing and forestry, is the main driving force behind the Madagascar economy, accounting for more than 1/4th of the country's GDP and employing an estimated 80% of the working population. Following the 2009-2013 political crisis foreign investment and aid into the country slowed, with many investors worrying over the weakness of the business environment of the country. Investment resumed in 2014 with the election of the current president, however observers are still wary considering the political climate of the country.

- Police Force²
 - The security forces in Madagascar are separated into two main groups; The National Police are charged with maintaining peace and security within urban centers, and the Gendarmerie is primarily responsible for the same duties outside of the major urban areas. The public security forces in Madagascar lack crucial resources to be able to effectively provide security assistance to citizens in a timely manner, or in some cases provide services at all.
 - The President also has access to a small security force that is not bound to the authority of the Minister of the Interior (Police) or the Minister of Defense (Military).
- Military;³
 - The People's Armed Forces of Madagascar are made up of 4 forces; the Intervention Force, the Development Force, the Aeronaval Force, and the National Gendarmerie (Acts as a police force). The Malagasy Armed Forces take up 0.69% of the country's GDP. Military service is male only, between 18-25 years of age, with no conscription. There is a service obligation of 18 months in the military or civilian equivalent. The National Gendarmerie age of service is between 20-30 years of age, and as high as 35 years of age for recruits with prior military service.
 - Active Personnel: 21,600 (13,500 Frontline, 8,100 Reserve)
 - Land Force: 12 Tanks, 103 Armored Fighting Vehicles, 17 Towed-Artillery.
 - Air Force: Total 20 aircraft; 6 transport aircraft, 2 trainer aircraft, 4 helicopters.
 - Naval Force: Total 8 vessels; 7 coastal defense craft.

Security and Social Issues

While Madagascar is considered relatively safe in comparison to other African nations, the recent political instability and economic hardships have made the state an area of potential conflict. Over the past 4 years crime and social instability have increased in intensity, making the region increasingly dangerous for foreigners. The main issues the country faces are listed below.

1. Criminal Activity⁴

- There is a large amount of petty theft, with more serious crimes such as home invasions occurring in areas with limited public security force protection. Urban centers have seen an increase of pickpockets, with targets being jewelry, electronics, and identification. The majority of home robberies occurred between Malagasy, with a small number of victims being foreigners.

² Information concerning the police force is outdated.

<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/country/madagascar.html>

³ http://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country_id=madagascar

⁴ "Madagascar 2015 Crime and Safety Report," U.S. Department of Diplomatic Security OSAC (March 19th, 2015).

- Organized crime is not a major problem in Madagascar, however there are reports of significant mid- and senior-level military and government officials being involved in illegal activities. There have also been reports of public security forces using their weapons to conduct home invasions, or loaning their weapons to criminal elements to do so. Senior government officials have been linked to smuggling of raw materials (gems, endangered animals, rosewood etc.). There has also been an influx of Chinese organized crime in Madagascar, who use the country as a location for money laundering, heroin trafficking, and various other criminal activities. Madagascar is a transit country for illegal narcotics, however there have been no recent reports of drug-related violence.
- Areas of concern: In Antananarivo large crowds have gathered near the Presidential Palace, along Avenue de l'Indépendance, and near Behoririka. Travel by foreigners at night should be avoided.
- There are instances of mob justice targeting foreign nationals, occurring in areas such as Diego, Toamasina, Antananarivo, and Tolagnaro (Ft. Dauphin). Furthermore, there have been instances of kidnappings, however they are mainly targeted towards the wealthy Malagasy or Indo-Pakistani community.
- Cattle-wrangling in the Southern areas of Madagascar has become a large problem, with disputes and violence erupting over livestock ownership and movement. The government has undertaken measures to police the area, however systemic issues surrounding local governance and policing has led to increased tension and has not fully dealt with the issue.
- Piracy remains an issue for Madagascar given its location along the African coast. Reports indicate that the coast off Madagascar is an area of transit for Somali pirates who use the island as a resupply area.⁵

2. Political Instability⁶

- Slow economic growth and frequent electrical outages in 2014 led to demonstrations against the government, as well as the resignation of Prime Minister Kolo Roger in 2015. The President named a new prime minister and government in 2015, with very few changes from the old one in an effort to maintain government stability. There are rumors that there exist anti-government elements seeking to destabilize the current government, however this cannot be confirmed. There exist deep divisions within the public security forces, with some sectors of the military and police forces still loyal to the ousted regimes of Ravalomanana and Rajoelina. The threat of a military coup is low, since political rivals understand that such an action would destabilize their legitimacy with the international community and stall the development of the economic sectors.
- There have been no major instances of civil unrest in 2014, however it continues to be a possibility given the frustration surrounding power outages, possibility of

⁵ "Piracy Prone Areas and Warnings," Available from: <http://www.iccwbo.org/products-and-services/fighting-commercial-crime/imb-piracy-reporting-centre/piracy-prone-areas-and-warnings/>

⁶ See also; <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2013/06/05/madagascar-measuring-the-impact-of-the-political-crisis>

food/gas shortages, risk of natural catastrophes, and the unpredictability of Malagasy politics.

3. **Corruption**⁷

- There are reports that both the government and public security forces in Madagascar suffer from widespread corruption. Observers in Madagascar estimate that 40% of the country's gross domestic product stemmed from illicit activities and corruption in 2013, 20% higher than estimates during the 1990's. Government officials used their positions to gain personal profit from domestic and international industries. While corruption efforts have been successful at punishing low-level violators, they have been ineffective at targeting high-level corruption unless the persecution is politically motivated. Corruption exists within the public security forces of Madagascar as well, with police officers and gendarmerie using their positions for personal profit. Public security forces use their positions for bribery, theft, and organized crime activities. Corruption also exists within the judiciary, with prosecutors demanding bribes to release defendants or suspects under detention.
- The Independent Anticorruption Bureau (BIANCO) is the nominally independent government agency with a presidentially appointed director and oversight from the Committee for the Safeguard of Integrity within the presidency. BIANCO has investigated a majority of corruption complaints, however due to resource constraints is only able to follow through with persecution of a select number. Those that divulge information concerning corruption are afforded various protections, which are in general effective in promoting whistleblowers.

4. **Terrorism**

- Most terrorist attacks that take place in Madagascar are directly linked to political violence. There have been various small bombings in urban areas, as well as arrests of small groups that were targeting political targets. Political demonstrations have led to looting and destruction of property, with the most notable example being the protests against the Jirama (power Supply Company) in Tamatave.

5. **Poverty**⁸

- The Madagascar government has been unsuccessful in dealing with the rise of poverty over the last decade. The majority of citizens who live in poverty reside in rural areas, and are mainly composed of children and young adults looking for work. The poverty rate in Madagascar has led to a decrease in the quality of basic services, including but not limited to water access, proper sanitation, medical services, and electricity. It is important to note that although illiteracy and poverty are often intertwined, illiteracy rates have fallen as more Malagasy have

⁷ "Madagascar 2013 Human Rights Report," 17-19.

⁸ "Face of poverty in Madagascar: Poverty, Gender and Inequality Assessment," Poverty Reduction and Economic Management (PREM) Africa Region (March 2014), available from: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/18250/781310PRIORITY0English0Apr900May012.pdf?sequence=5>

improved their reading and writing abilities. Access to secondary and tertiary education remains limited for the vast majority of the population, with access to higher education being more difficult.

6. Disease

- Plague: In 2014, Madagascar had reports of the spread of a plague in rural areas, with some migration towards urban areas by a limited amount of infected. While the plague has subsided since December health officials are worried that it can resurface during the summer months. The plague has a high epidemic potential, and given the poverty situation in Madagascar and development of informal housing can spread quickly through densely packed urban areas.⁹
- Malaria: While there are initiatives to control the spread and contraction of Malaria in Madagascar, the disease remains a continual problem for the country, especially in the rainy areas. The political instability in 2009 and the subsequent 5 years of turmoil hindered efforts to curb the disease, and the country has only recently begun to recoup from the effects. It should be noted that while areas that are more humid and wet are predominately at risk for developing the disease, urban areas and drier climates are also at considerable risk.¹⁰
- HIV/AIDS: The prevalence of HIV/AIDs in Madagascar is relatively low in comparison with other countries in the area. The disease has moved from being an epidemic in the country to under control through various prevention programs and government initiatives.¹¹

7. Human Rights¹²

- Apart from issues relating to the public security forces and civil unrest, Madagascar is also faced with numerous other human rights issues which include; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; lengthy pretrial detention; an inefficient judiciary that lacks independence; intimidation of journalists; restrictions on freedoms of speech, press, and assembly; official corruption and impunity; societal discrimination and violence against women, persons with disabilities, and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community; trafficking of women and children; and child labor, including forced child labour.¹³

8. Human Trafficking¹⁴

⁹ “Global Alert and Response (GAR): Plague – Madagascar,” World Health Organization (November 21, 2014). Available from: <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/plague/madagascar-outbreak/en/>

¹⁰ “Presidents Malaria Initiative: Madagascar, Malaria Operational Plan FY 2015,” USAID (2015). Available from: <http://www.pmi.gov/docs/default-source/default-document-library/malaria-operational-plans/fy-15/fy-2015-madagascar-malaria-operational-plan.pdf?sfvrsn=3>

¹¹ “Rapport d’activite sur la riposte au SIDA a Madagascar,” Comite national de lute contre le SIDA (Avril 2014). Available form: http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/country/documents/MDG_narrative_report_2014.pdf

¹² “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013: Madagascar,” U.S. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (March 2014), available from: <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2013&dliid=220130>

¹³ It should be noted that while these issues are from a 2014 report on the human rights situation in Madagascar it can be safely assumed from other reports that these issues have not been dealt with in any significant regard.

¹⁴ “Trafficking in Persons Report,” United States Department of State (June 2014): 255-257.

- Madagascar is a source for men, women, and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking. Trafficking in persons has increased due to the lack of economic development and political instability. The Malagasy government has initiated programs to curb the spread of human trafficking, however they have not been implemented completely and do not address the root causes of trafficking in Madagascar.

9. Resource Issues

- Mining: The mining sector in Madagascar has been slow to revitalize itself after the 2009 military coup, and has only recently been able to begin to restore operations. There is uncertainty over the direction the current government will take, or if it will remain in power given the political atmosphere of the country, leading mining companies to be hesitant to completely resume activities in the country until the situation is under control.¹⁵
 - There have been instances of strikes by workers and local residents at mines asking for increased services and security precautions on mining sites. For example, in March of 2015 there was a strike on a Sherritt International Corp. mine, reducing the output of the mine. The mine resumed full-scale operations after 3 weeks.¹⁶
- Forestry: The levels of corruption and the general absence of rule of law has created a permissive environment for illegal logging and the export of rare hardwoods, primarily from northern forests. Madagascar is facing issues with illegal logging and deforestation, with many cleared areas not being rehabilitated afterwards or protected areas being infringed on by illegal loggers. The illegal logging industry has also had a negative effect on protected wildlife in the area, with species either being forced out of their natural habitats or being hunted for food. Deforestation due to clear cutting or agricultural development has led to soil erosion and runoff, harming the soil quality and polluting neighboring areas.
- Electricity: The government has been slow to develop adequate energy production capabilities, leading to many areas having limited access to electricity and disruptions in service. The lack of electricity, especially in rural areas, has led to civil unrest and demonstrations. There has been little effort by the government to develop the electrical grid due to a variety of reasons, such as lack of funds and corruption, and the current facilities are becoming unable to provide power over time.
- Water: There are massive disparities in the amount of Malagasy who have access to safe drinking water, leading to health issues in communities. Access in urban areas is slightly better than rural areas, yet poor infrastructure maintenance and

¹⁵ “Political divisions to frustrate legislative changes to Madagascar’s mining and energy sectors, triggering small-scale unrest in 2015,” HIS Jane’s Intelligence Weekly (December 8th, 2014), available from: <http://www.janes.com/article/46793/political-divisions-to-frustrate-legislative-changes-to-madagascar-s-mining-and-energy-sectors-triggering-small-scale-unrest-in-2015>

¹⁶ <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/industry-news/energy-and-resources/sherritt-hit-by-strike-at-nickel-mine-in-madagascar/article23577281/>

development does not guarantee quality drinking water. In terms of sanitation, only 11% has access to adequate sanitation facilities.¹⁷ The Malagasy government has been slow to adopt regulation concerning maritime development and management strategies, leading to a fisheries sector that is using unsustainable fisheries practices, as well as coastal development that harms the natural habitats of marine life. Employment issues have forced sectors of the Malagasy population to turn towards fishing to sustain themselves, and there has been an increase in informal settlement development along the coast.¹⁸

- Agriculture: While Madagascar has a large and relatively stable agricultural sector it faces numerous issues in regards to its ability to provide food for its population. The most pressing issues facing the agricultural industry in Madagascar come from climate change and infestations of crop destroying insects. Climate change has increased the amount of droughts the country experiences, leading to fires both on farms as well as in forested areas. Locusts have become a problem for Malagasy agricultural farmers, who have continually lost larger yields of crops to insect migrations and encroachment.¹⁹

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¹⁷ "Madagascar: The Issue," UNICEF, available from: <http://www.unicef.org/madagascar/5557.html>

¹⁸ "Madagascar's Waters," Available from: <http://www.wcs.org/where-we-work/oceans/west-indian-ocean/madagascar.aspx>

¹⁹ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2013/06/05/madagascar-measuring-the-impact-of-the-political-crisis>
<http://www.wildmadagascar.org/conservation/threats.html>