

A fraught election in Madagascar

Saturday 18 November 2023, by [MARTIAL Paul](#) (Date first published: 4 November 2023).

An election with identical political offers and a repressive climate prevents any debate on the disastrous record of the outgoing government.

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The presidential election is due to take place on 16 November 2023 for the first round and possibly on 20 December if there is a second round. [1] Andry Rajoelina, the outgoing president, is one of the thirteen candidates.

Turpitude of power

None of the candidates has emerged from popular struggles or the many militant civil society organisations. Although this election is taking place among the Malagasy elite, the atmosphere remains particularly tense due to a number of affairs.

These include the questioning of Rajoelina's nationality. The law provides for the loss of Malagasy nationality for any national who obtains another at his or her own request. This is the case for Rajoelina, who was granted French nationality in 2014. This is all the more embarrassing for him as he has adopted a nationalist image in his dispute with France. He has demanded - and rightly so - the return of the Éparses islands without waging a real political and diplomatic battle. The acquisition of French surveillance software called "Predator", sold at the time by the company Nexa, was used against opponents. It was used to imprison journalists, whistleblowers and opponents. Another case involved the forced resignation of the President of the Senate, preventing him from replacing the President of the Republic during the election period. This function was entrusted to the government, heightening fears of massive electoral fraud.

Corruption and liberalism

Eleven candidates decided to refuse to run the election campaign in protest at the attacks on freedoms. Demonstrations and rallies other than those organised by Rajoelina are banned and fiercely repressed.

The regime is also plagued by corruption scandals. Romy Voos Andrianarisoa, Rajoelina's chief of staff, was arrested in London as she was about to negotiate bribes worth €260,000 and a 5% stake in Gemfields, a company specialising in the extraction of precious stones. His close associate, a Frenchman, has also been jailed. He is not the only one from France to be swirling in the circle of power. Some are in charge of the Presidency's communications or the "Madagascar Emergence Plan", which essentially consists of major works of questionable utility, such as the creation of new

towns.

In 2018, Rajoelina promised education for all children, access to healthcare for the population and decent jobs. The record of his mandate is overwhelming. According to World Bank statistics, poverty will have risen by 81% by 2022, and social inequalities have increased sharply. People are experiencing more frequent and longer-lasting power and water cuts.

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P.S.

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Footnotes

[1] Al Jazeera, 16 November 2023 [“Voting ends in Madagascar presidential election boycotted by opposition”](#).