

Research Briefing

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By Nigel Walker,
Eleanor Gadd

Madagascar: 2023 presidential election and relations with the UK



Summary

- 1 Background
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Contributing Authors

Louisa Brooke-Holland, Africa specialist

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Summary

On 16 November 2023 Madagascar held a presidential election, postponed from the original date of 9 November.

13 candidates contested the election, including the current, and former, presidents.

The country was hoping for its third peaceful election since the political crisis of 2009, when Andry Rajoelina ousted then President Marc Ravalomanana in a coup backed by the army.

The 2023 election came at a time of unprecedented socio-political and economic tension, with Madagascar having faced several natural disasters and difficult economic and social conditions since the previous election.

The election campaign began on 10 October, although the leading opposition candidates, known as [the “Collective of Eleven”, said they would abstain from campaigning until their grievances were addressed.](#)

These grievances included demands for the disqualification of Rajoelina as a candidate due to his acquisition of dual Malagasy-French citizenship in 2014. Only Malagasy citizens may run for office and, according to Article 42 of the 1960 law on citizenship, an adult loses Malagasy citizenship if they voluntarily acquire a foreign citizenship.

Opposition candidates had held daily demonstrations since 2 October, with up to 50,000 supporters in attendance. [Two of the candidates, Marc Ravalomanana and Andry Raobelina, were injured in a demonstration on 7 October](#) when police and soldiers fired tear gas to disperse a gathering of opposition supporters.

Tensions grew ahead of the election and [there were concerns the poll would not be seen as being “free and fair”.](#) There were doubts the results would be accepted by everyone.

The [UK Government expressed concern at the tense political atmosphere in Madagascar](#) and called on all parties to exercise restraint, and for efforts to be made to restore confidence in the electoral process. The [US Government, which provided funding for the elections, also urged the government of Madagascar](#) to “respect the freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly”.

In October 2023 the UN Human Rights office [expressed concern at the deteriorating human rights situation](#) in Madagascar in the lead up to the presidential election and urged the Malagasy authorities to ensure respect for human rights and the rule of law throughout the electoral period and beyond.

On 25 November Madagascar's Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) published the provisional results of the presidential election.

The results showed incumbent president Andry Rajoelina was re-elected with a clear majority, winning 58% of votes and, in securing more than half of votes cast, a second-round runoff poll would not be required.

However, 10 presidential contenders called for a boycott of the elections and have said they do not accept the results.

1 Background

On 11 July 2023 the Malagasy government announced that the first round of presidential elections would be held on 9 November 2023.¹

The High Constitutional Court of Madagascar later postponed this date to 16 November, after candidates were injured during an opposition demonstration.²

If no candidate were to win a majority of votes in the first round, then a second runoff poll would take place between the top two candidates on 20 December.

1.1 Voting system

The president is the head of state and is directly elected to serve a five-year mandate, with a limit of two terms in office.

Candidates for the presidency must be at least 35 years of age and have resided in Madagascar for a minimum of six months prior to the date of the submission of their candidacy.

Legislative power rests with the National Assembly, comprised of the National Assembly and the Senate.

The National Assembly has 151 members, with 87 elected in single-member constituencies 64 members elected to two-member constituencies. All are elected to serve five-year terms in office and the next legislative election is due in May 2024.³

The Prime Minister is nominated by the President, selected from the party or group of parties that has the largest number of seats in the National Assembly. The current prime minister, Christian Ntsay, was first appointed to the position in an interim government in June 2018 and was reappointed by the newly elected president, Andry Rajoelina, in January 2019.⁴

¹ Africa News, [Madagascar: presidential election to be held at the end of the year](#), 11 July 2023

² Africa News, [Madagascar postpones presidential election by a week](#), 12 October 2023

³ International Foundation for Electoral Systems, [Election Guide: Madagascar](#) [accessed 2 October 2023]

⁴ News Ghana, [Christian Ntsay reappointed Madagascar's prime minister](#), 22 January 2019

Prime Minister Ntsay is not a member of any of the three main political parties in Madagascar.⁵

The Senate has 33 members: 22 are elected from the provinces by an electoral college of regional councillors and mayors in each province; and 11 members are appointed by the President.⁶ All Senators serve five-year terms in office and the current Senate was elected in December 2020.⁷

The voting age in Madagascar is 18.⁸ For the 2023 election there were 10,768,137 registered voters.⁹

1.2 Recent history of instability

Madagascar was hoping for its third peaceful election since the political crisis of 2009, when Andry Rajoelina ousted then President Marc Ravalomanana in a coup backed by the army.

Rajoelina was declared president of the High Transitional Authority of Madagascar on 21 March 2009, five days after Ravalomanana transferred his power to a military council and fled to South Africa.

The international community viewed it as a coup d'état and took steps to isolate Rajoelina and his government.¹⁰

Both Rajoelina and Ravalomanana agreed not to contest the next election, in 2013, bowing to pressure from countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to give the island nation a fresh start after the coup that brought Rajoelina to power.¹¹

Rajoelina returned to win the presidential election in 2018, securing 56% of the vote in a second-round run-off against Ravalomanana.¹²

Winning the election again in 2023, and serving a full term, could see Rajoelina holding the presidency for a total of 14 years.

A sitting head of state is required to resign if they want to stand again as a candidate. As required by the constitution, Rajoelina resigned the presidency

⁵ Africa News, [Madagascar: President Rajoelina reappoints Ntsay as PM](#), 9 December 2019

⁶ As above

⁷ Europa World, Madagascar: [Directory – Government and politics](#) [accessed 13 November 2023]

⁸ CIA World Fact Book, Field Listing-Suffrage, [Madagascar](#) [accessed 2 October 2023]

⁹ International Foundation for Electoral Systems, [Election Guide: Madagascar](#) [accessed 2 October 2023]

¹⁰ Commons Library research briefing SN05962, [Madagascar's political crisis](#), 1 May 2012

¹¹ Alain Iloniaina, [Madagascar leader says will not run in vote, offers fresh start](#), Reuters, 15 January 2013

¹² BBC News Online, [Madagascar ex-leader Andry Rajoelina wins presidential run-off vote](#), 27 December 2018

in September 2023. Presidential powers are exercised by the government collectively with the prime minister as the head.¹³

Madagascar is among the poorest countries in the world not in conflict, with 75% of its 29 million population currently living in poverty.¹⁴ It is also one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world; susceptible to drought, flooding and cyclones, which contributes to food shortages.¹⁵

¹³ Reuters, [Madagascar president resigns ahead of polls in November](#), 10 September 2023

¹⁴ Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, [UK-Madagascar development partnership summary, July 2023](#), [accessed 3 October 2023]

¹⁵ Guardian, [‘Infants here don’t know how to eat’: millions facing famine in Madagascar](#), 4 March 2022

2 2023 presidential election

2.1 Election campaign

Since the last presidential election in 2018, Madagascar has faced several natural disasters (cyclones, floods, drought and epidemics), as well as difficult economic and social conditions.¹⁶

These socio-political and economic tensions have been evident throughout the 2023 presidential election.

Demonstrations

At the end of March 2023, seven months ahead of the election, Madagascar's Ministry of the Interior announced political protests could only be held in public if in "an enclosed place", so that public order could be maintained.¹⁷ Critics suggested the ban was intended to stifle dissent.¹⁸

Unrest built throughout 2023 and demonstrations have been taking place since 2 October, with over 10,000 people demonstrating in Antananarivo, Tulear, Majunga, Antsirabe, Mananara nord, Mananjary, Akazomanga, Anjanahary, Ampasapito, Behoririka and Fianarantsoa.¹⁹

At a demonstration in the capital on 2 October, security forces fired tear gas at opposition candidates, as they led a march on the central square to protest against what they described as an "institutional coup" to favour incumbent president Andry Rajoelina.²⁰

At another protest a few days later, presidential candidate Marc Ravalomanana sustained a leg injury when police and soldiers fired tear gas to disperse a gathering of his supporters. Another candidate, Andry Raobelina, suffered an injury to the face from part of an exploded tear gas canister on the same day.²¹

¹⁶ International Federation of Red Cross And Red Crescent Societies, [Madagascar elections readiness](#) (PDF), 31 October 2023

¹⁷ Al Jazeera, [Madagascar bans public protests ahead of presidential election](#), 3 April 2018

¹⁸ Al Jazeera, [Madagascar bans public protests ahead of presidential election](#), 3 April 2018

¹⁹ International Federation of Red Cross And Red Crescent Societies, [Madagascar elections readiness](#) (PDF), 31 October 2023

²⁰ Africa News, [Madagascar security forces fire tear gas on opposition candidates](#), 2 October 2023

²¹ Lovasoa Rabary, [Madagascar presidential candidate injured after opposition rally teargassed](#), Reuters, 7 October 2023

Addressing thousands of supporters wearing his party colour, orange, at his re-election campaign launch on 10 October, incumbent president Andry Rajoelina urged his supporters to “go to your towns, your districts, go throughout Madagascar to create an orange wave.”²²

The rally marked the official start of the campaign period, but 11 of the 12 opposition candidates said they would abstain from campaigning until their grievances were addressed.²³

Election delayed by one week

On 12 October the High Constitutional Court said in a statement on its website that it had ordered the first round of the election be moved back one week, to 16 November, a move opposed by Rajoelina.²⁴ There was no change to the date of a second-round run-off poll, should it be required.

The court gave no reason for postponing the election, but Soava Andriamarotafika, spokesperson for the Independent National Electoral Commission, said it would allow them more time to prepare for the vote.²⁵

Daily demonstrations continue across Madagascar and, on 22 October, the leading opposition candidates, calling themselves the “Collective of Eleven”, held a large rally in Antananarivo that attracted 50,000 supporters. The candidates denounced what they described as “an illegitimate electoral process”.²⁶ There have also been continued demands for the disqualification of Rajoelina as a candidate due to his acquisition of dual Malagasy-French citizenship in 2014. Only Malagasy citizens may run for office and, according to Article 42 of the 1960 law on citizenship, an adult loses Malagasy citizenship if they voluntarily acquire a foreign citizenship.²⁷

With tensions growing between the government and opposition ahead of the election, there were concerns the poll would not be seen as being “free and fair”. Adrien Ratsimbaharison, an academic who has studied Madagascan politics, says there are doubts the results would be accepted by everyone.²⁸

²² France 24, [Madagascar president launches re-election bid amid accusations of ‘institutional coup’](#), 10 October 2023

²³ Africa News, [Madagascar: Andry Rajoelina kicks off re-election campaign amid tensions](#), 10 October 2023

²⁴ Reuters, [Madagascar court orders one-week postponement of presidential election](#), 12 October 2023

²⁵ As above

²⁶ Africa News, [Madagascar opposition denounce “illegitimate electoral process”](#), 22 October 2023

²⁷ Adrien Ratsimbaharison, [Madagascar’s 2023 presidential election is crucial for the island’s future, but it’s off to a rocky start](#), The Conversation, 6 November 2023

²⁸ As above

2.2

International response

In a statement on 16 October, the UK Government expressed its concern at the tense political climate in Madagascar and reiterated the importance of respecting the Constitution, calling on all parties to exercise the greatest restraint. The UK Government also expressed concern about the electoral process complying with international standards; that is to say transparent, reliable, inclusive and peaceful, to ensure the results can be recognised by all.²⁹

A communique issued on 9 November reaffirmed the UK Government's position and expressed concern following violent incidents that had been seen in Antananarivo in recent days, in which several people, including members of the press, had been injured.³⁰

The US Government, which has given \$900,000 to Madagascar to help with the election, has called on the government to “respect the freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly” of candidates and their supporters. The US Ambassador emphasised the importance of “genuine political competition” and for elections to “reflect the free expression of the will of the people.”³¹

On 19 September 2023, representatives of eight countries and international organisations including the EU, US, France and Japan said they were closely following the run-up to the presidential election in Madagascar, following disputes over its regularity.

In October 2023 the UN Human Rights office it expressed concern at the deteriorating human rights situation in Madagascar in the lead up to the presidential election and urged the Malagasy authorities to ensure respect for human rights and the rule of law throughout the electoral period and beyond.³²

²⁹ UK in Madagascar (@UKinMadagascar), [X \(Twitter\)](#), 16 October 2023 [accessed 13 November 2023]

³⁰ UK in Madagascar (@UKinMadagascar), [X \(Twitter\)](#), 9 November 2023 [accessed 13 November 2023]

³¹ US Embassy in Madagascar, [The United States expands support for elections, education and outreach in Madagascar](#), 10 August 2023; US Embassy in Madagascar, [US Mission statement on free and fair elections for the official campaign season](#), 9 October 2023

³² Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, [Comment by UN Human Rights Office spokesperson Seif Magango ahead of elections in Madagascar](#), 10 October 2023

2.3 Election results

Madagascar's Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) published the provisional results of the presidential election on 25 November 2023.³³

The results showed incumbent president Andry Rajoelina was re-elected with a clear majority, winning 58% of votes and, in securing more than half of votes cast, a second-round runoff poll is not required.

Former president Marc Ravalomanana was second, taking 14.4% of votes.

The results also showed 127,145 blank votes were cast, with a further 147,583 invalid votes.

Turnout was 46.36%. The low turnout followed calls for a boycott by 10 presidential contenders and is reportedly the lowest figure in Madagascar's history.³⁴

Candidate	Party	No. of valid votes	% of valid votes
Andry Rajoelina	Young Malagasies Determined (TGV)	2,856,090	58.95
Marc Ravalomanana	I Love Madagascar (TIM)	697,453	14.40
Siteny Randrianasoloniaiko	PSD-RPSD Vaovao-ABA	586,273	12.10
Hery Rajaonarimampianin	New Force for Madagascar (HVM)	251,145	5.18
Hajo Andrianainarivelo	Malagasies Rise Up Together (MMM)	91,155	1.88
Tahina Razafinjoelina	Solidarity for the Homeland (FTT)	76,608	1.58
Roland Ratsiraka	Malagasies Come to Their Senses (MTS)	76,532	1.58
Jean Brunelle Razafintsandraofa	Clean Political Party (APM)	63,336	1.31
Sendrison Raderanirina	Progress for All of Madagascar (Fy-M)	39,061	0.81
Lalaina Ratsirahonana	Our Family Party of Christ (An'I Kristy)	32,580	0.67
Andry Raobelina	Horn and New Wind (ARB)	30,137	0.62
Auguste Paraina	Good to Imitate (TT)	29,764	0.62
Jean-Jacques Ratsietison	Malagasies Need Purchasing Power (FMI)	14,630	0.30
Total		4,844,764	100.00

Source: [Provisional election results for the first round of the Presidential election](#), CENI Madagascar, 25 November 2023

³³ CENI Madagascar, [Provisional election results for the first round of the Presidential election](#), 25 November 2023

³⁴ Gloria Aradi, [Andry Rajoelina: Madagascar president re-elected in contested poll](#), BBC News Online, 25 November 2023

After the provisional results were announced, Rajoelina said:

The Malagasy people have chosen the path of continuity, serenity and stability.

I thank the Malagasy people who now refuse to choose the wrong path, who no longer accept to take the path of unrest. Democracy is exercised through elections and not in the streets or through unrest.³⁵

Opposition candidates have said they do not accept the results.

The High Constitutional Court of Madagascar is mandated to announce the final results within nine days of the Independent National Electoral Commission publishing its provisional results.³⁶

2.4 Candidates for President

On 9 September 2023 the High Constitutional Court of Madagascar published its final list of nominated candidates for the presidential election.³⁷

13 candidates are contesting the elections. Below are profiles of the candidates, listed in alphabetical order.³⁸

Hajo Herivelona Andrianainarivelo

Hajo Andrianainarivelo was born on 22 April 1967 in Antananarivo, Madagascar's capital.

He entered politics in 1995, becoming mayor of the rural commune of Ankadinandriana and taking over from his father.

In 2009 Andrianainarivelo joined the opposition movement led by Andry Rajoelina, against the then President Marc Ravalomanana.³⁹ He was later given a position in Rajoelina's cabinet, appointed Minister of Decentralisation and Planning in March 2009.

Andrianainarivelo was the first to file his candidacy for the 2013 presidential election and founded his own political party, Malagasies Rise Up Together

³⁵ Al Jazeera, [Madagascar president re-elected as opposition denounces irregularities](#), 25 November 2023

³⁶ Gloria Aradi, [Andry Rajoelina: Madagascar president re-elected in contested poll](#), BBC News Online, 25 November 2023

³⁷ High Constitutional Court of Madagascar, [Decision No. 11-HCC/D3 of September 9, 2023 establishing the final list of candidates for the first round of the presidential election of November 9, 2023](#), 9 September 2023

³⁸ CENI Madagascar, [Procès verbal du déroulement du tirage au sort des 13 candidats du lundi 11 Septembre 2023](#), 12 September 2023

³⁹ The Southern Echo, [Who is Hajo Andrianainarivelo?](#) 5 September 2023

(Malagasy Miara Miainga, MMM). He came third in the first round, gaining 10.54% of the vote.⁴⁰

He is again the candidate for the MMM party in the 2023 election, focusing his campaign on education and decentralisation under the slogan: “Dare to fight for a better future.”⁴¹

Auguste Richard Paraina

Auguste Paraina was born on 20 July 1954 in Farafangana, a town in southeast Madagascar. He is the son of a civil servant and a teacher.

After completing his secondary education locally, he graduated from the National School of Administration (ENA) of Madagascar in 1978.

Paraina began his career working for the Bank of the Republic of Madagascar, before entering politics in 1996 when he joined the government and was appointed Minister of Economy and Planning. He was appointed Minister of Trade and Consumption the following year.⁴²

Paraina served one year as Speaker of the National Assembly from 2002-03 and subsequently held diplomatic posts as Ambassador to Italy and, later, as Ambassador to Romania.⁴³

Paraina is the presidential candidate for the Good to Imitate (Tsara Tahafina, TT) party. His main policy objectives include fighting corruption, improving access to public services, transparency, good governance and sustainable development.⁴⁴

Sendrison Daniela Raderanirina

Sendrison Raderanirina is an entrepreneur who, in 2019, created a solidarity fund to support small entrepreneurs following the economic struggles of the Covid-19 pandemic.⁴⁵

He is the candidate for the Progress for All of Madagascar (Fandrosoa Faritsy laby ho an'i Madagasikara, Fy-M) party in the 2023 presidential election.

Hery-Martial Rajaonarimampianina Rakotoarimanana

Hery Rajaonarimampianin was born on 6 November 1958 in Antsofinondry, Madagascar. He has married twice and has two sons.

⁴⁰ BBC Monitoring, [Biography: Hajo Herivelona Andrianainarivelo](#), 17 March 2022

⁴¹ [Malagasy Miara Miainga \(MMM\) party website](#) [accessed 6 November 2023]

⁴² The Southern Echo, [Who is Paraina Auguste Richard?](#) 19 September 2023

⁴³ BBC Monitoring, [Biography: Auguste Richard Paraina](#), 10 May 2006

⁴⁴ The Southern Echo, [Who is Paraina Auguste Richard?](#) 19 September 2023

⁴⁵ Moov.mg, [2023 presidential election: Incognitos around!](#) 6 September 2023

In 1982 he gained a Master's degree in economics from the University of Antananarivo and, in 1986, a DEA in finance and accounting economics from the University of Quebec at Trois-Rivieres, Canada. Then, in 1991, he obtained the Canadian Diploma of Accounting from the Certified General Accountant's Association (CGA).⁴⁶

In 1995 he set up his own accountancy and audit firm in Antananarivo, after serving four years as Director of Studies at the National Institute of Accounting Science and Business Administration in Antananarivo.

Rajaonarimampianina was elected President of Madagascar in December 2013 and served one term in office, defeated by Andry Rajoelina in the 2018 election.

During his presidency he reached out to political rivals in a call for national unity, with the African Union lifting its four-year suspension of Madagascar shortly after his swearing-in.

Rajaonarimampianina is the candidate for the New Force for Madagascar (Hery Vaovao ho an'i Madagasikara, HVM) party.

Andry Nirina Rajoelina

Andry Rajoelina was born 30 May 1974 and is married. His father was an officer in the Malagasy army. Before entering politics he was a DJ and business, owning the Viva radio and TV stations.⁴⁷

Rajoelina entered politics when he was elected mayor of Antananarivo in December 2007.

In 2009 he took power from President Marc Ravalomanana during a coup backed by the army, a move met with international condemnation.⁴⁸ Rajoelina remained as president of the transitional government until January 2014.

He agreed not to contest the 2013 presidential election, bowing to pressure from the international community, but was the first to announce his candidacy for the 2018 election. He won this election, securing 56% of the vote in a second-round run-off against Marc Ravalomanana.⁴⁹

Winning the 2023 election could see Rajoelina holding the presidency for a total of 14 years.

⁴⁶ BBC Monitoring, [Biography: Hery Martial Rakotoarimanana Rajaonarimampianina](#), 23 February 2023

⁴⁷ BBC Monitoring, [Biography: Andry Rajoelina](#), 17 July 2023

⁴⁸ Reuters, [AU suspends Madagascar, U.S. to halt aid](#), 20 March 2009

⁴⁹ BBC News Online, [Madagascar ex-leader Andry Rajoelina wins presidential run-off vote](#), 27 December 2018

Ahead of the 2023 election there have been reports that he acquired dual French and Malagasy nationalities in 2014, leading to demands by opposition parties for his candidacy to be declared invalid.⁵⁰

The High Constitutional Court rejected the appeals by three opposition candidates, which demanded Rajoelina's candidacy be declared invalid for "for lack of Malagasy nationality", and so he is clear to stand in 2023.⁵¹

He is the presidential candidate for the Young Malagasies Determined (Tanora Malagasy Vonona, TGV) party.

Siteny Thierry Randrianasoloniaiko

Siteny Randrianasoloniaiko was born on 27 July 1972 in Toliara, Madagascar.

He is prominent in the field of judo and won several judo championships in Madagascar and was part of the Malagasy national team from 1990. He also served as national coach before being elected to the presidency of the Malagasy Judo Federation in 2009.

In 2021 Randrianasoloniaiko was elected president of the African Judo Union and became vice-president of the International Judo Federation. He is also president of the Malagasy Olympic Committee.⁵²

He entered politics in 2013 upon his election to the National Assembly.

Randrianasoloniaiko is the presidential candidate for a coalition of parties including Fitambolagnela-IAD, PSD, and RPSD Vaovao-ABA.⁵³

Andry Tsiverizo Raobelina Andriamalala

Andry Raobelina is the candidate for the Horn and New Wind (Anjomara sy Rivo-Baovao, ARB) party.

He is one of two candidates who were injured during protests ahead of the election. Raobelina suffered an eye injury when security forces fired tear gas.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ The Star (Madagascar), [Madagascar President Rajoelina to seek re-election in November](#), 7 September 2023

⁵¹ Africa News, [Presidential election in Madagascar: Rajoelina in the race, the controversy ruled out](#), 12 September 2023

⁵² The Southern Echo, [Siteny Randrianasoloniaiko: A leader in judo and politics in Madagascar](#), 13 September 2023

⁵³ International Foundation for Electoral Systems, [Election Guide: Republic of Madagascar](#) [accessed 6 November 2023]

⁵⁴ AP News, [Madagascar postpones presidential election for a week after candidates are hurt in protests](#), 12 October 2023

Jean-Jacques Jedidia Ratsietison

Jean-Jacques Ratsietison has a background in economics, obtaining a degree in the subject from the University of Madagascar in 1982. He then worked as a senior auditor at HSD, a firm within the international Ernst & Young network until 1985. He then held a series of senior financial and auditing roles and, in 1992, was appointed economic advisor to President Albert Zafy.⁵⁵

Ratsietison is fluent in Malagasy, French, English and Spanish, with a good knowledge of German and basic Italian.

He founded the FMI-Malagasy association (Malagasies Need Purchasing Power) in 2014 and remains chair of the party. The general objectives of the movement are: for a lasting increase in the purchasing power of all Malagasy people; to fight against violence in all its forms; and to tackle extreme poverty in Madagascar.⁵⁶

Lalaina Harilanto Ratsirahonana

Lalaina Ratsirahonana is the youngest son of Norbert Ratsirahonana, a former prime minister and former acting president of Madagascar.

Ratsirahonana is the candidate for the Our Family Party of Christ (Antoko Fihavanantsika “An’I Kristy”) party.⁵⁷ He has pledged his beliefs will not affect his administration, saying: “Secularism would not be violated at all if I were elected.”⁵⁸

Roland Ratsiraka

Roland Ratsiraka was born on 15 August 1966 in Antananarivo.

In 1996 Ratsiraka’s uncle, Didier Ratsiraka, a former president of Madagascar, appointed him as his campaign director for the province of Tamatave.⁵⁹

In 1998 Roland Ratsiraka founded the regional political party Toamasina Tonga Saina (TTS) and was elected to the National Assembly. He was later elected Mayor of Toamasina, in 1999, but was suspended from office in 2002. He returned to the post in the 2003 mayoral election.

⁵⁵ Cercle-K2, [Profile: Jean-Jacques Ratsietison](#) [accessed 6 November 2023]

⁵⁶ As above

⁵⁷ The Southern Echo, [Candidacy of Lalaina Harilanto Ratsirahonana](#), 15 August 2023

⁵⁸ Ravo Andriantsalama, [Presidential election - Lalaina Ratsirahonana declares himself a candidate](#), L’Express de Madagascar, 16 August 2023

⁵⁹ The Southern Echo, [Who is Roland Ratsiraka?](#) 6 September 2023

Ratsiraka contested the 2006 presidential election, finishing in third place with 10% of the vote. He finished fourth in the 2013 presidential election, securing 9% of votes.

Following the 2013 election he held several government positions: Minister of Public Works from April 2014 to April 2016; and Minister of Tourism from April 2016 to June 2018.⁶⁰

Ratsiraka contested the 2018 presidential election but came 20th in the first round with just 0.43% of the vote.⁶¹ Following this defeat, he threw his support behind Andry Rajoelina, who went on to win the election.⁶²

2023 sees Ratsiraka contesting his fourth consecutive presidential election. He is the candidate for the Malagasies Come to Their Senses (Malagasy Tonga Saina, MTS) party.

He has positioned himself as the candidate of “people in great difficulty” and has called for a “dream team” of competent and honest leaders in Madagascar.⁶³

Marc Ravalomanana

Marc Ravalomanana was born 12 December 1949 in Imerinkasinina, near Antananarivo, and is married with four children.

After studying in Sweden he returned to Madagascar and set up a dairy business, gaining the nickname “yogurt king”. The business developed into the Tiko group, holding the monopoly on all dairy and oil products in Madagascar and making him a millionaire in the process.⁶⁴

Ravalomanana contested the December 2001 presidential election. He declared himself President two months later, on 22 February 2002, and started appointing his cabinet, even though the election results remained disputed and initial counts indicated no candidate had secured an overall majority.

On 29 April 2002 the High Constitutional Court announced the results of a recount, which showed Ravalomanana had won a clear victory over Didier Ratsiraka, securing 51.46% of votes against Ratsiraka’s 35.9%.⁶⁵

Ravalomanana was re-elected in the 2006 presidential election, beating 13 other candidates and securing more than 50% of votes in the first round.

⁶⁰ BBC Monitoring, [Biography: Roland Jarovana Ratsiraka](#), 25 August 2018

⁶¹ High Constitutional Court of Madagascar, [Result of the Presidential Election of 7 November 2018](#) (PDF) [accessed 6 November 2023]

⁶² The Southern Echo, [Who is Roland Ratsiraka?](#) 6 September 2023

⁶³ As above

⁶⁴ BBC Monitoring, [Biography: Marc Ravalomanana](#), 5 July 2023

⁶⁵ As above

He served until March 2009 when he was ousted by Andry Rajoelina, who assumed the presidency with the backing of the military. Ravalomanana fled to Swaziland and, later, to South Africa.

In 2010 Ravalomanana was sentenced in absentia to life imprisonment with hard labour for alleged abuse of office. He returned to Madagascar in October 2014 and was immediately placed under house arrest. His sentence was lifted and he was freed from house arrest in May 2015, when he resumed his business and political activities.

He contested the December 2018 presidential election, finishing second to Andry Rajoelina.⁶⁶

In 2023 Ravalomanana is the candidate for the I Love Madagascar (Tiako i Madagasikara, TIM) party.

During this election campaign Ravalomanana was one of two candidates that were injured during protests, with his party saying he sustained a leg injury.⁶⁷

Tahina Razafinjoelina

Tahina Razafinjoelina is a former teacher and Malagasy rally driving champion.

He was the campaign director for former president Marc Ravalomanana, during the last presidential election in 2018.

Razafinjoelina is the candidate for the Solidarity for the Homeland (Firaisankinan'ny Tia Tanindrazana, FTT) party and his election programme focuses on education, budgetary decentralisation, and “digital Madagascar”.⁶⁸

Jean Brunelle Razafintsandraofa

Jean Brunelle Razafintsandraofa is 45 years old and has been a member of the National Assembly since the 2019 legislative election.⁶⁹

Razafintsandraofa served as Minister of Tourism from June 2018 to January 2019.⁷⁰ He is currently vice-president of the National Assembly.⁷¹

Previously aligned with Young Malagasies Determined (TGV) and All United with Andry Rajoelina (IRD), both established by Rajoelina, Razafintsandraofa

⁶⁶ As above

⁶⁷ AP News, [Madagascar postpones presidential election for a week after candidates are hurt in protests](#), 12 October 2023

⁶⁸ The Southern Echo, [Tahina Razafinjoelina on the Starting Line for the Presidency](#), 13 August 2023

⁶⁹ Balaky, Profile: [Deputy RAZAFINTSIANDRAOFA Jean Brunelle](#) [accessed 6 November 2023]

⁷⁰ BBC Monitoring, [Biography: Jean Brunelle Razafintsandraofa](#), 27 January 2019

⁷¹ L'Express de Madagascar, [APM presents Brunelle Razafintsandraofa](#), 25 August 2023

is the 2023 presidential candidate for the Clean Political Party (Antoko Politika Madio, APM).

He is running under the campaign slogan “Malagasy first” and has pledged to change the system and end bad governance.⁷²

⁷² L'Express De Madagascar, [APM presents Brunelle Razafitsiandraofa](#), 25 August 2023

3

UK-Madagascar relations

The UK and Madagascar have had a diplomatic relationship for 200 years.

On 23 October 1817 the British agreed a treaty of friendship and peace with King Radama I, formally recognising him as monarch of the entire island of Madagascar.⁷³

Since then, diplomatic relations have continued.

On 26 June 1960, when Madagascar gained independence from France, the British Consul General Andrew Ronalds was appointed Ambassador to the newly independent Madagascar.

The British Embassy in Antananarivo was closed in August 2005 due to budgetary reasons and the British High Commissioner to Mauritius was appointed non-resident Ambassador to Madagascar. The German embassy hosted a British interests section. The British embassy reopened in October 2012. The Foreign Secretary said the embassy will enable the UK to provide more support to British business, strengthen trade relations and provide full consular assistance to British residents and visitors. The Foreign Secretary also said the reopened embassy will help the UK support “Madagascar’s return to a fully recognised constitutional Government after free and fair elections.”⁷⁴

The Malagasy Embassy in London closed in February 2011. On 4 September it was reopened by President Hery Rajaonarimampianina. During his week-long visit to the UK, he also visited the National Archives to view the 1817 Treaty of Friendship and participated in a UK-Madagascar Trade & Investment Forum.⁷⁵

The following month, from 22-27 October 2017, the Princess Royal, accompanied by her husband Vice Admiral Sir Tim Laurence, visited Madagascar. They were received by President Rajaonarimampianina and carried out several engagements in the country.⁷⁶

⁷³ The Anglo-Malagasy Society, [An Anglo-Malagasy chronology](#) [accessed 7 November 2023]

⁷⁴ [HC Deb 23 October 2012 cc48-9WS](#)

⁷⁵ The Anglo-Malagasy Society, [An Anglo-Malagasy chronology](#) [accessed 7 November 2023]

⁷⁶ Official website of the British Royal Family, [The Princess Royal's visit to Madagascar](#), 3 November 2017

3.1 Humanitarian and development aid

More recently the UK Government has provided Madagascar with humanitarian assistance and development aid.

In the financial year 2021/22 the FCDO spent £13 million of UK Overseas Development Aid bilaterally through centrally managed programmes, principally on a humanitarian response (£6 million), family planning (£3.5 million) and disaster risk insurance (£2.1 million). The UK's key multilateral partners in Madagascar are the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the African Development Bank and the UN System, including the global health, education and climate funds.⁷⁷

On 17 March 2022, the UK Minister for Africa Vicky Ford announced £500,000 of UK aid for Madagascar following a series of extreme weather events.⁷⁸

This new UK support was to allow UNICEF to provide safe water, emergency sanitation and hygiene services for 13,500 people and to help monitor for outbreaks of water borne diseases.

This sum was in addition to the £500,000 the UK contributed to the Red Cross emergency appeal earlier that month.

3.2 Trade

Trade between the two countries has also increased. On 1 November 2023 the UK Government published its latest Trade and Investment Factsheet on Madagascar. This stated that the total trade in goods and services (exports plus imports) between the UK and Madagascar was £65 million in the four quarters to the end of Q2 2023, an increase of 44.4% from the four quarters to the end of Q2 2022.⁷⁹

3.3 Commonwealth

Madagascar applied to join the Commonwealth in 2012.⁸⁰ During an Inter-Parliamentary Union visit to the UK in 2018, it was reported that the Malagasy President was still keen for his country to join the group, noting

⁷⁷ PQ 78724 [on [Madagascar: Development Aid](#)], 3 November 2022

⁷⁸ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office press release, [UK provides additional emergency support to Madagascar](#), 17 March 2022

⁷⁹ Department for Business and Trade, [Trade and Investment Factsheet: Madagascar](#) (PDF), 1 November 2023

⁸⁰ Andrée Massiah, [Commonwealth of Nations: 'The club of the 21st Century'](#), BBC News Online, 12 March 2012

Commonwealth countries in Africa seem to be doing much better politically and financially, than others.⁸¹

⁸¹ [HC Deb 9 January 2018, cc169-70](#)

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