

Political crisis in Madagascar

2009



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Madagascar is a popular tourist destination, well known for its tropical climate and unique flora and fauna. However, in early 2009, the security situation in the country deteriorated significantly due to a stand-off between the then president, Marc Ravalomanana, and Andry Rajoelina, the leader of the political opposition and then mayor of the capital, Antananarivo. Rajoelina mobilised his supporters and began anti-government protests in the capital in late January; however, many of these deteriorated into violence, leaving at least 100 people dead. Attempts were made to resolve tensions through talks between the two main political rivals, but these all failed.

Large elements of the security forces later refused to clamp down on the protesters and essentially refused to accept orders from the president. The crisis culminated in Ravalomanana standing down on 17 March and handing power to the armed forces. Shortly after the president's resignation, the army appointed Rajoelina as the new president of Madagascar.

During the crisis, many shops, restaurants and hotels closed their doors and hundreds of tourists and business travellers left the country - some with the assistance of red24.

red24 response

1. Crisis management planning

During the crisis in Madagascar, the Crisis Response Management Centre (CRMC) continually monitored and analysed the extent of the security risk. A CRM team also met to discuss the developments and to put plans in place to conduct evacuations or provide on-the-ground support, should any of our clients require assistance.

....red24's Crisis Response Management Centre (CRMC) is actively monitoring developments in Madagascar. red24 currently has security consultants on the ground in the country who can offer direct assistance to clients. For further information, please contact red24.

2. Travel and security alerts - Email and SMS (text) notification

Email and SMS alerts were sent to subscribers whenever there was a significant security development in the country. Using this information, clients were able to avoid potentially dangerous areas and stay updated.



Madagascar: (Update)

President Ravalomanana has resigned and handed power to the military. The situation in Antananarivo remains tense, and there is still a possibility of violent clashes in the short-term.

3. red24 Daily News

Clients and their families (or employees) were also kept abreast of security-related events and developments in Madagascar via our Daily News product. Subscribers to the Daily News receive a brief round-up of regional security-related news each business day.



Madagascar riots (Update)

Crowds of rioters in the south western city of Toliara, Madagascar, were dispersed yesterday by troops who fired shots into the air....

4. Ongoing security analysis

An up-to-date situation report was compiled and made available on the red24 website. Clients in Madagascar were also sent detailed reports that were specific to their location and needs.



red24 advice

Due to the ongoing tensions, the uncertainty of the situation given the possible involvement of the military and the violent nature of the crisis thus far, red24 currently advises against all non-essential travel to Madagascar.



5. Reactive crisis management

Several clients who found themselves in danger, were successfully evacuated with the assistance of red24.

Case study - Evacuation

In March 2009, two clients in Madagascar, who were concerned for their safety, contacted red24 for assistance. One was a woman working near the capital, Antananarivo; she said she wanted to remain where she was, but requested an evacuation if the situation deteriorated. The second client was working in north west Madagascar and requested immediate assistance and evacuation.

red24's team of security specialists reacted right away. A consultant travelled to the north west by car to avoid being stranded, should the airports close unexpectedly. Meanwhile the client became increasingly concerned for her safety as she saw the army patrolling at the nearby airport. To ensure her safety and to reassure her, we arranged for the client to stay in a secure hotel until the security consultant could reach her. A few hours later they drove back to the capital together. During the drive they had to pass a number of illegal roadblocks but the consultant ensured this passed without incident. They then flew to South Africa, where they were both met by red24's Operations Director and escorted to a chosen hotel.

Throughout the evacuation, the security specialist stayed in constant communication with the CRMC, providing regular updates as to his whereabouts and the status of the operation. red24 analysts also stayed up to date with developments in the country, feeding current information and analysis to the consultant to keep him apprised of the situation. We also contacted both clients regularly to ensure their safety and to keep them updated.

Air tickets were reserved for the second client staying in the capital, should she change her mind about an evacuation. Indeed she later requested assistance and our security consultant responded quickly and professionally, escorting her safely out of Madagascar.

Due to our rapid response and effective planning, both clients are now safe and happy.

Advice for clients choosing to remain in Madagascar

- Keep a low profile.
- Avoid all public gatherings due to the possibility of violent civil unrest.
- Avoid travelling to Iavoloha Presidential Palace and the surrounding area due to a high concentration of armed supporters of the president.
- 13 May Plaza in Antananarivo should also be avoided, as protests and demonstrations in this area are common and have turned violent in the past.
- Avoid all gatherings of security force personnel.
- Abide by the 22:00 to 04:00 curfew currently in place in the Antananarivo region.
- Follow the directives of local authorities.
- Alert your respective embassy or consulate of your presence in the country.
- Monitor the local media and stay up to date with any new developments.