



# Global Nonviolent Action Database

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## Madagascar citizens force free elections, 1990-1992

- African Democracy Campaigns (early 1990s)

**Time period notes:** *It is unclear when the Forces Vives began planning for action, but the end date is set at the presidential elections in August about a year after Ratsiraka declared he would support the democratization process.*

1990

to: August

1992

**Country:** Madagascar

**Location City/State/Province:** Antananarivo

**Location Description:** *Protests took place all across the country, from the capital to other regions*

**Goals:**

The ousting of president Didier Ratsiraka and the formation of democratic, multiparty elections

## Methods

**Methods in 1st segment:**

- 048. Protest meetings › The Forces Vives start planning protests and demonstrations

**Methods in 2nd segment:**

**Methods in 3rd segment:**

- 038. Marches › Thousands of citizens march on the presidential palace
- 117. General strike › Pan-societal strike in Madagascar

**Methods in 4th segment:**

- 116. Generalised strike
- 117. General strike › In response to the August 10th killings

**Methods in 5th segment:**

**Methods in 6th segment:**

**Additional methods (Timing Unknown):**

- 104. Professional strike

**Notes on Methods:**

There is little specific information on every protest that took place during the years of '91 and '92, and not much information to classify it as violent or nonviolent. The actions I have noted are the only that I can confirm as fitting within a nonviolent

campaign. The segment length may be slightly skewed because there is no clear start date.

## Classifications

**Classification:**

Change

**Cluster:**

Democracy

Economic Justice

**Group characterization:**

- Citizens of Madagascar

## Leaders, partners, allies, elites

**Leaders:**

Albert Zafy and the Forces Vives

**Partners:**

National Council of Christian Churches

**External allies:**

Not known

**Involvement of social elites:**

Not known

## Joining/exiting order of social groups

**Groups in 1st Segment:**

**Groups in 2nd Segment:**

**Groups in 3rd Segment:**

**Groups in 4th Segment:**

**Groups in 5th Segment:**

- National Council of Christian Churches

**Groups in 6th Segment:**

**Segment Length:** *Approximately 4 months*

## Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

**Opponents:**

President Didier Ratsiraka and his state socialist regime

**Nonviolent responses of opponent:**

Not known

**Campaigner violence:**

Fringe violence and riots

**Repressive Violence:**

The presidential guard fired into a crowd of thousands marching on the presidential palace, killing and wounding dozens. Additional sources also report repressive violence at protests

## Success Outcome

**Success in achieving specific demands/goals:**

6 points out of 6 points

**Survival:**

1 point out of 1 points

**Growth:**

2 points out of 3 points

**Notes on outcomes:**

Although Ratsiraka was ousted in '93, he returned to Madagascar in '97 and resumed his presidency. In that sense, the success was rather impermanent. In terms of survival and growth, it is hard to classify because action took place across the country on different levels and while it may have petered out in some districts it could have grown in others.

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Madagascar gained its independence from French colonialism in 1960 after nearly 70 years under French rule. Vice Admiral Didier Ratsiraka was sworn into office on December 21, 1975, after a military coup ousted president Philibert Tsiranana, who had been in office since 1959. In his first term as president, Ratsiraka nationalized Madagascar's banks, insurance companies and mineral resources, following a socialist model that was wrought with censorship and government repression. By the late 1980's Ratsiraka's socialist regime had impoverished Madagascar. Even though the regime had made concessions to adopt the free market reforms outlined by the IMF, poverty and repression drew fast growing voices of opposition.

In 1989, Ratsiraka's 'reelection' drew widespread anger and riots from the population, as many suspected that the elections had been fraudulent. 75 people were killed in the riots. In 1990, an activist named Albert Zafy formed an opposition coalition called Forces Vives comprised of 16 political opposition parties and socio-professional organizations. Their goal was to organize a series of mass strikes and protests to force Ratsiraka out of office and usher in a new regime.

In May 1991, the Forces Vives orchestrated their first mass general strike against the government, temporarily crippling Ratsiraka's economy, and in July mass demonstrations shook the nation. The year 1991 was dotted with civil service strikes and protests organized by the Forces Vives that involved indignant citizens from all over the country. The unrest was widespread and apparent, taking hold among the working class citizens of Madagascar, the politicians, and soon the military.

The popular discontent with the regime took a new significance on August 10, 1991, when the Forces Vives organized a massive, peaceful march to the President's Palace. Between 100,000 and 400,000 people marched to represent a nation demanding that Ratsiraka step down from office to give way to a multiparty political system. When the activists reached the palace they were confronted by the presidential guard whose methods of dispersal proved fruitless until they opened fire with guns and grenades into the crowd. Between ten and twenty people were killed and many more were wounded. Shortly after the killings the Forces Vives orchestrated another massive strike against all banks, businesses, and public agencies; the Forces Vives maintained the widespread strike through August. In addition, local demonstrations and protests continued during the strike. In response to the August 10th killings, the anti-government protesters gained an ally in the National Council of Christian Churches, which threw its support behind the protesters when their attempts to mediate the situation failed.

With the waning support of the military and the unrest amplified by the presidential guard's violent treatment of the peaceful march, Ratsiraka made the decision to concede to the protesters' demands on October 31, 1991. He declared that he would support the drafting of a new constitution and the formation of free, fair multiparty elections where citizens would be allowed to vote for a candidate from any party. During this democratization process, a transitional government was set up in which Albert

Zafy was head of the High State Authority, essentially sharing power with Ratsiraka during the process. A new constitution was approved in August 1992, and elections took place that November. As the Forces Vives candidate, Albert Zafy captured 46% of the popular vote with Ratsiraka lagging at 26% (the remainder of the vote was spread among a handful of candidates from other parties). On February 10, 1993, a second vote was held between Ratsiraka and Zafy, with Zafy boasting 67% of the vote. Ratsiraka receded into self-imposed exile.

## Research Notes

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### Additional Notes:

Ratsiraka returned to Madagascar after his self-imposed exile and managed to regain the presidency by 1997 and remained in power until massive demonstrations ousted him once again in 2002. (See Madagascar general strike in support of Marc Ravalomanana, 2002).

**Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:**

Elena Ruyter, 12/10/2011

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