

## Madagascar Tension After Botched Arrest Of Opposition Leader

Written by Rudi Prinsloo  
Saturday, 07 March 2009 08:25 -

---



By Gregoire Pourtier

Madagascan security forces attempted to arrest opposition leader Andry Rajoelina on Friday, heightening tensions between police and protestors that have already killed four people this week.

Several witnesses told AFP that security officials attempted to enter Rajoelina's residence overnight to detain him.

"The regime was determined to capture TGV," one official close to President Marc Ravalomanana's regime said on condition of anonymity, referring to the 34-year-old opposition leader by his nickname.

Rajoelina's private television network Viva issued an ensuing call on his supporters to rush to his residence in central Antananarivo to protect him.

Several streets in the city centre were blocked off by police and witnesses told AFP of scuffles near Rajoelina's house, located in a district which also houses the French school.

"We were trying to get the children back to their homes because classes have been halted... but now we are not letting them out because we heard gunshots," a teacher told AFP, asking not to be named.

Ravalomanana announced earlier this week that his security forces would take tougher measures against opposition protestors.

The young leader describes Ravalomanana as a dictator starving his people and late last year mounted a fierce political challenge against the president, who has been in power since 2002.

The 34-year-old Rajoelina last week walked out on talks with Ravalomanana, accusing his rival of playing down his camp's grievances and pledging to revert to mass street action to unseat the president.

But several protests have been thwarted by police this week, sparking clashes which left at least four people dead on Wednesday and Thursday, medical sources said.

"A young girl died Thursday in the Ankatso district, apparently killed by a stray bullet," an official from the capital's main Joseph Ravoahangy hospital told AFP on condition of anonymity Friday.

"In Antananarivo, at least one other person died on Wednesday from a bullet in the stomach," the official added.

Two people had also been shot dead on Wednesday during protests in Ambositra, a town located in the centre of the vast Indian Ocean island.

## Madagascar Tension After Botched Arrest Of Opposition Leader

Written by Rudi Prinsloo

Saturday, 07 March 2009 08:25 -

---

The United Nations and African Union have dispatched envoys in a bid to defuse the political crisis and prevent a resumption of violent clashes that have already killed close to 100 since the start of the year.

A group of ambassadors managed to meet Rajoelina on Friday in a bid to rekindle efforts for a peaceful solution to the island's worst political crisis since 2002.

Talks between the feuding delegations had been called off on Thursday, with Rajoelina's camp citing fear of arrest.

Rajoelina last month launched a rival administration in a bid to destabilise Ravalomanana, naming his own cabinet and proclaiming himself in charge of the country's affairs.

Source : Sapa-AFP /po

Date : 06 Mar 2009 13:59