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The Human Cost of the Madagascan Coup

In March 2009 the mayor of Antananarivo - Andry Rajoelina - and his supporters staged a violent coup, overthrowing the Madagascan government. Since those tumultuous times, the ordeal of the Madagascan people has largely slipped from the media spotlight. However, this does not necessarily mean that conditions have improved;

As a result of Mr Rajoelina's actions, **the international community withdrew all but humanitarian support**, which has resulted in the country entering a steep economic decline. More than half of the previous governments budgets had come from foreign aid, the withdrawal of which has left the new government with a serious shortfall.

One major casualty of the economic decline has been the country's once burgeoning textile industry. Previously worth around \$600 million, and accounting for over 60% of Madagascan exports, the industry has suffered a severe loss in international trade and fifty thousand jobs have been lost. The loss of trade has partially come around as a result of US actions;

The [African Growth and Opportunity Act](#) (AGOA) permits African Governments to provide goods to the American market without needing to pay the usual taxes. This, however, is only permitted if the country shows a commitment to democracy. **President Obama suspended the agreement** with Madagascar as a result of Mr Rajoelina's failure to hold an election last year. Mr Rajoelina had failed to reach an agreement with the opposition.

Many Madagascan families are now finding that they are unable to afford to send their children to school, or *even to feed them*. Even more seriously, **over a quarter of the country's healthcare centres have closed**, so access to healthcare is difficult

at best. Centres which previously provided free care to the 50% of Madagascan children who are malnourished have been forced to start charging. The situation is so severe that at one point, a centre attached to the Befelatanana Hospital had a single patient. This did not happen through lack of demand, but because parents could not afford to pay for the healthcare.

It is very expensive, but it is for medicine for my grandson, so we have to do what we can to come up with the money

Most centres are charging \$50 for the provision of care, this small amount is the equivalent to a months wages in one of the countries factories. This, of course, is assuming that the parent is able to find a job at all.

[Unicef](#) has begun funding many of the centres, but **Madagascar is a poor country** and their efforts alone will not be enough.

We here at Freedom4All believe that the AGOA was created with the best of intentions, it is right that we should be encouraging democracy. However, it is not those in power that suffer for a failure to practise democracy, it is the people of the country that suffer. The very people who are given absolutely no choice over who is in power are the ones that are punished by the AGOA.

It's true that you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs, but in some cases the costs are just too high. Please, write to your political representative and ask them to back us in asking President Obama to allow Madagascar to trade again. Measures do need to be taken to ensure that Mr Rajoelina observes democracy, but we cannot punish the people of Madagascar for his failings.

If we do not act now, the possible repercussions are clear

- **Thousands of children may needlessly die of malnourishment**
- **Those that survive will lack education**
- **Families will continue to live in poverty for many years**
- **Crime will become more pervasive in Madagascar**
- **Civil Unrest may begin**

We cannot allow current and future generations in Madagascar to suffer for the actions of Mr Rajoelina. This is not a democratically elected leader, and the people of Madagascar share **no** responsibility for his behaviour.

The BBC has more on this story, including interviews with the Madagascan people, [here](#).

Tags: [Africa](#), [African Growth and Opportunities Act](#), [AGOA](#), [Andry Rajoelina](#), [Antananarivo](#), [Befelatanana Hospital](#), [Coup](#), [Democracy](#), [Economic Decline](#), [Economic Sanctions](#), [Education](#), [Exports](#), [Free Trade](#), [Healthcare](#), [Human Rights](#), [Madagascar](#), [Obama](#), [Politics](#), [Poverty](#), [President](#), [US](#)

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