

UA 155/02

Fear for safety/Medical concern/ 24 May 2002  
Possible Prisoner of Conscience (POC)

**MADAGASCAR** Ali Sarety (65 years old), leader of the KMMR (Support Committee for Marc Ravalomanana, *Comité de Support pour Marc Ravalomanana*) in Ambanja, province of Antsiranana (Diégo-Suarez)

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Possible prisoner of conscience Ali Sarety is being denied specialist medical treatment by the provincial authorities and security forces in province of Antsiranana, northeast Madagascar. He is a prominent supporter of Marc Ravalomanana, who was officially declared President of Madagascar on 29 April. As such there are fears for his safety, as he is at risk of being ill-treated by supporters of the outgoing President, Didier Ratsiraka.

Ali Sarety was reportedly arrested on 11 April, with two of his bodyguards in Ambanja, by security officers loyal to the President Didier Ratsiraka. He was later transferred to *camp de gendarmerie Pardes*, a security camp in the city of Antsiranana (Diégo-Suarez), in the province of Antsiranana where he stayed until 17 May. He was held without charge along with 18 other prisoners arrested in different parts of the province, including political prisoners and possible prisoners of conscience. The *Tribunal de Première Instance de Diégo* (The First Instance Tribunal in Diego) was unable to charge the prisoners with a recognizable criminal offence.

Ali Sarety and his two bodyguards were transferred back to the town of Ambanja, Antsiranana (Diégo-Suarez) Province on 17 May. The *Tribunal de Première Instance de Ambanja* (The First Instance Tribunal in Ambanja) reportedly ordered the two bodyguards to be released, but Ali Sarety was kept in detention and reportedly charged with keeping weapons in his house. He is currently being treated at the *Centre Médico-chirurgical de Saint-Damien, Saint-Damien* Surgical Medical Centre in Ambanja. He has a suspected neurological disorder, which was allegedly caused by the beating he received at the time of his arrest. He requires specialist investigation and treatment, which is only available in the capital Antananarivo. However provincial authorities loyal to outgoing President Ratsiraka, including members of security forces present in Ambanja, are reportedly impeding his transfer.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Madagascar has been marred by unrest since the contested results of the Presidential elections of December 2001 between outgoing President Didier Ratsiraka and Marc Ravalomanana, mayor of the capital Antananarivo. On 29 April 2002, after the ordering of a vote recount by the High Constitutional Court, Marc Ravalomanana was declared President of Madagascar. The recount followed weeks of generally peaceful protests by supporters of Marc Ravalomanana in Antananarivo against official results, which culminated with Marc Ravalomanana's self-proclamation as President on 22 February 2002. Despite efforts by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to mediate between the two rival Presidential candidates, outgoing President Didier Ratsiraka refused to recognize Marc Ravalomanana as the new President and set up his own government in the province of Toamasina (Tamatave) with the backing of four regional governors. These governors unilaterally declared the independence of the provinces of Toamasina (Tamatave), Antsiranana (Diégo-Suarez), Majunga and Toliara (Tuléar) from the central government in Antananarivo.

Human rights violations on both sides have steadily increased throughout the country since the stand-off between Marc Ravalomanana and Didier Ratsiraka. In particular, Amnesty International has received many reports of members and suspected supporters of Marc Ravalomanana in the four "independent" provinces being intimidated, arbitrarily arrested and tortured by regional authorities, security officers or militia supporting the outgoing President.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in French or your own language:**

- expressing concern for the safety of Ali Sarety in the town of Ambanja and seeking assurances that he will not be harassed or intimidated;
- expressing concern for Ali Sarety's ill-health, which was allegedly caused by being beaten at the time of his arrest;
- calling on the provincial authorities to give him immediate and unimpeded access to medical analysis and treatment which are appropriate for his condition;
- calling on the provincial authorities to clarify whether charges are pending against him and asking for more information about the basis of these charges;
- explaining that if he was arrested solely for the peaceful expression of his political beliefs, he should be released immediately and unconditionally;
- calling for a prompt, independent and impartial investigation into his alleged ill-treatment by security forces, for those responsible to be suspended and promptly brought to justice.

**APPEALS TO:**

Governor of Diégo-Suarez Province

M. Jean-Robert Gara  
Gouverneur de la province de Diégo-Suarez  
Palais du Faritany  
201 Diégo-Suarez  
Madagascar

**Telegrams: Governor of Diégo-Suarez Province, Madagascar**

**Fax: + 261 20 82 29319**

**Salutation: Dear Governor**

Armed Forces Minister under President Didier Ratsiraka

General Ismaël Mounibou  
Ministre des Forces Armées de Didier Ratsiraka  
c/o Gouverneur de Tamatave  
Palais du Faritany  
Boulevard Ratsimilaho  
501 Tamatave  
Madagascar

**Telegrams: General Mounibou, Tamatave, Madagascar**

**Fax: + 261 20 22 21842**

**Salutation: Dear General**

Prosecutor of the First Instance Tribunals in Ambanja

Procureur du Tribunal de Première Instance d'Ambanja  
Palais de Justice  
203 Ambanja  
Diégo-Suarez  
Madagascar

**Telegrams: Procureur du Tribunal de Première Instance d'Ambanja, Diégo-Suarez, Madagascar**

**Salutation: Dear Prosecutor**

General Prosecutor of Tribunals in Majunga

Procureur Général du Tribunal de Majunga

Palais de Justice

401 Majunga

Madagascar

Fax: + 261 20 62 22743

**Telegrams: Procureur Général du Tribunal de Majunga, Madagascar**

**Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General**

**COPIES TO:**

Mme Alice Rajaonah

Garde des Sceaux et Ministre de la Justice

Ministère de la Justice

Faravohitra

101 Antananarivo

Madagascar

and to diplomatic representatives of MADAGASCAR accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 5 July 2002.