



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

GRADYE M. PARSONS
STATED CLERK

October 20, 2011

The Honorable Hilary Clinton
Secretary of State
US Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Clinton:

As Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) I am writing to thank you for the United States government's continuing support for human rights and democracy in Madagascar. A recent Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) delegation to Madagascar heard repeated expressions of gratitude for the US Embassy's role in promoting these objectives.

The delegation also heard from our partners in the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar (FJKM) that the revised "roadmap" for political reform brokered by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and signed on 17 September 2011 may offer a glimmer of hope for a peaceful way out of the country's nearly three-year-old political crisis. Although we wrote to you in March to express grave misgivings about an earlier version of the roadmap, the FJKM's cautious optimism prompts us to write again to urge you to use your influence to promote adherence by all parties to both the letter and the spirit of the accord.

One of the roadmap's unaddressed flaws is its lack of detail, particularly with regard to its human rights commitments. Although the document requires Madagascar's self-appointed president (and the transitional government that he selects) to create a climate conducive to free, fair and transparent elections, it sets no timetable for the restoration of respect for basic human rights, such as the freedoms of expression, assembly and worship, or the release of political detainees. In the meantime, the Rajoelina regime continues to suppress independent radio stations, such as the FJKM's Radio Fahazavana. It also continues to keep scores of political opponents in prison; even those who have been granted "temporary liberty" pending trial find that the courts repeatedly defer judgment, thereby keeping them under constant threat of renewed incarceration.

We urge the US government, in consultation with other members of the international community responsible for supporting implementation, to begin to "unpack" this requirement by articulating detailed benchmarks and expectations for its fulfillment. This might, for example, include a set of minimum conditions that must be met in order for each right to be fully upheld.

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We believe further that the roadmap alone cannot provide an adequate platform for free and fair elections. It will need to be accompanied by extensive public education programs to ensure that the Malagasy people are aware of and capable of exercising their rights effectively, including the right to vote. If the conditions can be put in place for free and fair elections, we would also want US organizations with electoral expertise to be able to provide technical support and monitoring of the electoral process. While we appreciate the US government's decision, in the wake of the coup d'état that deposed Madagascar's democratically elected president, to restrict its assistance to humanitarian aid, we feel strongly that it is now time to review this policy. We recommend that the US government make additional funds available through international and non-governmental bodies to support democracy and human rights education initiatives, election monitoring and support, and efforts to build peace and national reconciliation.

Finally, the PC(USA) delegation heard frequently that the roadmap could only be successful if the Malagasy military adopts a strictly neutral position and refrains from actively supporting the Rajoelina regime through continued acts of intimidation and repression of freedom of expression and assembly. Regarding the military, we are alarmed and concerned by the French government's practice of embedding personnel in the Malagasy military, something that we were told affects the army at every level. We urge the US government to use diplomatic channels to raise this matter with its French counterparts and to seek an end to the practice.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) continues to be profoundly concerned and moved by the suffering of Madagascar's people. The roadmap can only succeed as a strategy to restore Madagascar to a path of democracy, peace and development if all actors, including members of the international community, make a good faith effort to ensure its full implementation. We hope that we can count on the US government to play a leading role in this regard.

Thank you very much for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Reverend Gradye Parsons
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly