

Spiralling Gen Z protests in Morocco and Madagascar fuelled by social inequality

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Protests have been ongoing since September 27 in Morocco, as young people have taken to the streets all over the country accusing the government of neglecting health care and education while prioritizing funding for the 2030 FIFA World Cup, which it is to host.

Demonstrators chanted “Stadiums are here, but where are the hospitals?” They called for education and health reforms and an end to corruption.

The protests were reportedly sparked by the deaths of eight pregnant women in 10 days following C-section operations at a public hospital in the southwestern city of Agadir. They reflect the widespread anger over worsening social conditions that have prompted tens of thousands to take hazardous migration routes to Europe. A recent survey found that one third would like to emigrate, with or without the necessary visas.

The protests were organized by a previously unknown collective, “GenZ 212”, a reference to Morocco’s dialling code, publicized on social media platforms and hubs such as Moroccan Youth Voice. GenZ 212 was inspired by similar protest movements in Kenya, Indonesia, Nepal, Peru and the Philippines. Like them it is politically amorphous, driven by the lack of opportunities, political corruption and the gulf between rich and poor. It proclaims distrust of all political parties.

The collective put out the call for protests days before on the platform Discord, rejecting violence and insisting that “The right to health, education and a dignified life is not an empty slogan but a serious demand.”

The authorities banned and suppressed rallies that were largely peaceful in the first three days. But after scores of protesters were arrested, including 100 in the capital Rabat, dozens more in the commercial capital Casablanca as well as in the cities of Marrakesh and Agadir, young people, mostly students and unemployed graduates, poured onto the streets.

Violence broke out in several cities, especially in areas of high unemployment and poor public and social services. In Sale, the capital’s impoverished twin city, a bank was set on fire. Local media outlets and videos on social media showed

protesters hurling rocks and setting vehicles ablaze.

On Wednesday, the police stepped up repression, killing three people and injuring hundreds more. In eastern Morocco’s largest city, Oujda, one person was injured when a police vehicle rammed into demonstrators. The Interior Ministry claimed that 263 police officers and 23 civilians had been injured. The police arrested a further 400 people, with more than 130 due to stand trial.

The opposition Justice and Development Party (PJD), the Federation of the Democratic Left, and the Moroccan Association for Human Rights (AMDH) accused the authorities of using “systematic violence” against young people “demonstrating peacefully” and condemned the government’s “security-oriented approach to social demands”.

When the PJD sought to take advantage of the protests, activists pointed out online that in October 2014, when former prime minister and PJD leader Abdelilah Benkirane was in power, he had called for rolling back the state’s role in health and education in favour of the private sector. On Friday, GenZ 212 demanded that billionaire Prime Minister Aziz Akhannouch, also mayor of Agadir, and his government resign.

The protest movement is Morocco’s most significant since the mass demonstrations during the Arab Spring in 2011 calling for a boycott of the constitutional referendum to be held in July that year—which included many Islamist activists and sympathisers close to the Justice and Development Party—and the months-long protest movement in the Rif region in the north of the country in 2016-2017.

None of the political parties have much popular support. They are unable to address the social and economic issues confronting the mass of the population. A 2025 World Economic Forum report highlighted Morocco’s economic problems, citing severe water shortages, exacerbated by climate change, as one of the most significant threats.

Also of concern was inflation, leading to widespread poverty and income inequality, made worse by huge disparities in wealth distribution. More than one third of

Morocco's young people are without work. Some 40 percent of Moroccans labour with primitive tools and animal-drawn ploughs—many in full view of the new Casablanca-Tangier bullet trains—on farms that account for only 15-17 percent of GDP, barely scratching a living.

While the government has focused on mega infrastructure projects, including the bullet train, tourist resorts and mining projects that consume vast quantities of water, linked to the country's ruling elite and royal family, it has spent little on basic infrastructure for workers, peasants and their families.

Similar Gen Z protests have broken out in Madagascar. Public anger over chronic power and water supply shortages that have led to hours-long daily outages by the state-owned utility company exploded following the arrest on 25 September of two leading city politicians, who had planned a demonstration in the capital, Antananarivo. Their call to take to the streets was taken up by civil society groups and the Gen Z Mada formation, a youth-led online movement.

The demonstrations spread to other towns and cities across the island, with activists forming a committee to organise further demonstrations following a meeting between Gen Z Mada, civil society groups and local politicians. Protesters denounced the blackouts, blaming rampant corruption in the power company, and accused the government of failing to guarantee basic rights.

President Andry Rajoelina responded by deploying the security forces across Antananarivo and other major cities, with police using tear gas and water cannon to disperse protesters. According to the UN, at least 22 people have been killed in violent clashes. The capital has been subject to a dusk-to-dawn curfew after reports of violence and looting, including the torching of the finance ministry's offices. Schools were closed last week.

As the protest movement gained momentum, some of the trade unions, including the largest, the Malagasy Trade Union Solidarity, have formally backed the youth-led movement. Some civil society organisations have called for the Church to lead talks to "prevent Madagascar from sinking into chaos or civil war".

Last Monday, Rajoelina sacked his government, accusing some of his ministers of failing to do their job properly, and invited dialogue. At the end of the week, he posted on his X account calling for calm, promised that the World Bank would fund the investment needed to expand the electricity supply and pledged to support businesses affected by looting.

None of this has assuaged public anger. Some organisers said they were disappointed by Rajoelina's speech and demanded an apology from him and the former prime minister, and the dismissal of Antananarivo's mayor.

Others waved placards with messages such as "We need

water, we need electricity, Rajoelina out". They said they would continue their fight for Rajoelina's resignation and radical reforms. These include the dissolution of parliament, the replacement of constitutional court judges and electoral commission members and the rooting out of corruption surrounding the president and his circle of businessmen.

These protests are the largest the Indian Ocean island has seen since the 2009 demonstrations against the elected president, Marc Ravalomanana, that led indirectly to the military coup that ultimately brought Rajoelina to power for the first time.

Madagascar is one of the poorest countries in the world. A massive 80 percent of its 32 million population live below the poverty line. Only about one-third of its people have access to electricity.

The latest World Bank briefing states, "Madagascar's long-term progress in poverty reduction has largely stalled, mirroring the sharp decline in average real incomes, as GDP per capita *fell* from US\$812 in 1960 to US\$461 in 2025 (constant 2015 US dollars)". It adds, "While rural poverty remains widespread, urban areas also experienced a marked deterioration in living standards over the decade, leaving the proportion of the population living in extreme poverty among the highest in the world".

These terrible conditions fuelling mass anger and discontent are found internationally. They are not simply the product of corruption, but of capitalism: the production of goods for private profit and their distribution by the market.

Resolving these problems means the international working class undertaking a conscious political struggle to expropriate the capitalist class, take state power, and run economic life based on social need not private profit and under the democratic control of workers. Workers and young people should contact the *World Socialist Web Site* and the International Committee of the Fourth International, which is the only organization that fights for this perspective.



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