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Madagascar: Online threats against human rights defender Mbolatiana Raveloarimsa

On 24 August 2019, human rights defender **Mbolatiana Raveloarimsa** received multiple threats on her Twitter account following an article she published in her weekly column in the newspaper *L'Express de Madagascar*. The threats came from two users who have previously harassed and threatened Malagasy women human rights defenders on Twitter.

[Mbolatiana Raveloarimsa](#) is a human rights defender working on democracy and good governance, women's rights, and disability rights in Madagascar. She is a journalist who has a weekly column in the newspaper *L'Express de Madagascar*, in which she writes about diverse issues including poverty and decriminalising abortion in Madagascar. Additionally, she is the Executive Secretary of the Coalition of Radios for Peace, a coalition that convenes over 25 different radio stations who focus on peace and citizen participation in Madagascar; she is also a founding member of Wake Up Madagascar, and she is the President of the organisation Autism Madagascar.

On 24 August 2019, Mbolatiana Raveloarimsa's weekly column was published in the newspaper *L'Express de Madagascar*; the column was a letter in English to the Pope in advance of his upcoming visit to Madagascar. It highlighted the pressing issues facing average citizens of Madagascar, especially extreme poverty and lack of good governance. Shortly after its publication, she shared the article on Twitter, and an account called iPartners Madagascar commented "Dear Mbolatiana. Please think u could un Tsiafahy if u continue to make problems. U are only a huge slut". The account referenced the prison Tsiafahy which is known in Madagascar as the prison for political prisoners.

Following this initial threat and smear, the account iPartners Madagascar and another account launched a torrent of threats against other, older posts on Mbolatiana Raveloarimsa's Twitter account. They wrote threats on posts that had nothing to do with the article, and went as far as to say that they knew where her office is, and that they have been to the office. They further threatened her by smearing her sexuality and body.

These two accounts have personally threatened Mbolatiana Raveloarimsa on Twitter before, and have targeted other women human rights defenders to the point that they chose to self-censor their posts due to the threats. The threats have intensified over time, and the most recent threats mention for the first time that they know the location of Mbolatiana Raveloarimsa's office.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned by the escalating online threats against Mbolatiana Raveloarimsa, in particular because the perpetrators mentioned the location of her office.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Madagascar to:

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the threats against **Mbolatiana Raveloarimsa**, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;

2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Mbolatiana Raveloarimsa as well as of the members of her family during the investigation;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in **Madagascar** are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including online harassment and threats