

GEN-Z MOVEMENTS: THE NEW GRAMMAR OF PROTEST

Key points

- 1. Gen-Z mobilisations have forged a new protest grammar:** they are less driven by abstract freedoms than by a **demand for basic justice and dignity**, rooted in everyday experiences of unfairness, contempt, and entrenched privilege.
- 2. Their organisational strength lies in being networked rather than led:** coordination circulates through platforms and peer-to-peer hubs, making these movements hard to “*decapitate*”, but also harder to convert into lasting political structure once the peak moment passes.
- 3. Repression has changed its role because it is now so visible** : filmed, shared and reframed almost instantly, **police violence no longer stays in the shadows**, and digital restrictions meant to suffocate mobilisation can themselves become the spark that reignites collective.
- 4. Outcomes hinge on the day after:** forcing a resignation or extracting concessions is only a first step, and without a minimum transition pathway, openings can be closed again by restored elites, securitised crackdowns, or opportunistic actors filling the vacuum.

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CHRONOLOGY

2018-2025

Student-led, anti-quota and regime change mobilisation in Bangladesh

2022-2025

Youth-led, anti-elite and digital mobilisation in Sri Lanka

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2025

Student-led and anti-elite mobilisation in Indonesia

SEPTEMBER-16 OCTOBER 2025

Gen-Z pension and anti-corruption protests in Peru

8-19 SEPTEMBER 2025

Youth-led and anti-corruption mobilisation in Nepal

SINCE 12 SEPTEMBER 2025

"Trillion Peso March" in Philippines

25 SEPTEMBER - MID-OCTOBER 2025

Gen-Z protests in Madagascar

SINCE 27 SEPTEMBER 2025

Gen-Z 212 protests in Morocco

I. CONTEXT

This document compiles country sheets on **recent “Gen-Z” mobilisations**. Its purpose is practical: to **give advocacy and operations teams a comparable baseline** for each case so they can decide what to do next with fewer blind spots. For every country, we summarise the context, the trigger(s), the forms of protest, the casualty picture together with the security forces’ *modus operandi*, and the outcome to date.

These mobilisations share a recognisable DNA. The demand frame centres on **fairness and dignity, less corruption and nepotism, fewer inequalities, less contempt from authorities**, rather than on claims for political rights and freedoms. A second shift concerns repression: it is no longer “invisible.” Policing and coercion are filmed, uploaded, and reframed within minutes, feeding back into mobilisation choices, public opinion, and the movements’ ability to document and contest the use of force.

They are **leader-light and networked**: coordination flows through social platforms (TikTok, Discord, Telegram, etc.), not through a single figure. Symbols and narratives travel quickly because they borrow from pop culture (from *Hunger Games* salutes to anime or meme iconography), which lower entry barriers and help disparate groups feel part of the same story.

Another recurring feature is **platform governance as a battleground**. Bans, throttling, and shutdowns (often meant to demobilise) can themselves become triggers, while movements increasingly move decision-making into online spaces when street action is constrained.

Finally, **these episodes are increasingly interconnected**: seeing youth mobilise elsewhere can accelerate participation through imitation, tactical learning, and a shared generational culture amplified by global information flows.



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Gen-Z movements examined

II. SRI LANKA - ARAGALAYA MOVEMENT

Period: 2022-2025 | youth-led; anti-elite; digital mobilisation

1. CONTEXT

A **youth-driven, cross-community protest** wave emerged during Sri Lanka's 2022 economic collapse. Students, first-time voters, and young professionals led occupations and mass rallies demanding an end to corruption and dynastic politics. The movement is often called "**Aragalaya**" ("*struggle*" in Sinhala); its flagship encampment was "**GotaGoGama**" ("*Go Home Gota*", nickname of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa). Momentum peaked between March and July 2022, then persisted around online-speech laws and reform debates through 2024-2025.



Anti-government protest in Sri Lanka on April 13, 2022 in front of the Presidential Secretariat

2. FORMS OF PROTEST

- Encampments and building occupations anchoring mass marches and road blockades.(1)
- Networked digital campaigns (#GoHomeGota), livestreams, and rapid fact-sharing.(2)

3. VICTIMS

Best public tallies indicate **one protester shot dead at Rambukkana on 19th April 2022 and at least eight other deaths**, with 225 or more injured on 9-10 May 2022 amid nationwide clashes; these clashes were triggered after ruling-party supporters attacked an anti-government protest camp in Colombo. Totals vary (~8-9 deaths) depending on whether reprisals are included.(3)(4)(5)

Modus operandi: Police and military clearances with batons, water cannon, tear gas; they operated targeted arrests; some live fire in specific incidents were reported as well as a pre-dawn raid post-transition targeting anti-government protesters at Colombo's main protest sites (notably GotaGoGama/Galle Face and the Presidential Secretariat area).

4. OUTCOME

- **9 July 2022:** Protesters overrun official residences; 13th July 2022 resignation pledged by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa.
- **21-22 July 2022:** Parliament elects the **new President Ranil Wickremesinghe** who launched pre-dawn raid to clear protesters camps. 50 people were injured and around 10 arrests were reported.(6)
- **Late 2022-2023:** Wickremesinghe consolidates power with Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna, the major ruling-party force allied to the Rajapaksa camp, backing as protests recede under a security-led crackdown, while politics pivots to International Monetary Fund-backed stabilization reforms and the 2023 local elections are effectively postponed.
- **24 January 2024:** Parliament passes Online Safety Act, criticized for chilling dissent during an election year.(7)
- **9 February 2025:** Cabinet approves amending the Online Safety Act No. 09 of 2024.
- **13 August 2025:** The Justice Ministry calls for public input on proposed amendments to the Online Safety Act (one-month submission window).
- **23 September 2024:** left-leaning, reformist and anti-corruption **Anura Kumara Dissanayake** (NPP) sworn in president after winning the election. (8)
- **3 July 2025:** IMF Executive Board completes the Fourth Review under Sri Lanka's Extended Fund Facility.

III. BANGLADESH - "STUDENTS AGAINST DISCRIMINATION"

Period: 2018-2025 (peak: June-August 2024) | student-led; anti-quota; regime change

1. CONTEXT

After the government scrapped quotas in 2018, a **High Court order in late June 2024 effectively reinstated major job quotas** (incl. 30% for families of 1971 freedom fighters), and **student networks repeatedly mobilised** (in 2018 and again in 2024). On 19th July 2024, authorities imposed an internet shutdown, a nationwide curfew, and deployed the army. On 21st July 2024, the Supreme Court scrapped most quotas, directing 93% of jobs to be merit-based. Protests broadened from quota reform to a one-point demand for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's resignation, achieved on 5th August 2024. The movement is widely known as **Students Against Discrimination** (endonym: *Bôishommo BirodhiChhatro Andolon*); some media also call it the "*July Revolution*."(10)(11)

2. FORMS OF PROTEST

- Student-led marches and processions from campuses to key institutions; road/rail blockades in several cities.
- General strikes/closures as the curfew took effect; universities closed.
- Digital coordination and documentation, despite nationwide internet shutdown starting 18-19 July; communications and SMS were cut.(12)
- Garment-industry strikes and factory shutdowns (notably a three-week wage protest in late 2023), with worker demonstrations and clashes with police. The garment-industry accounts for nearly 82% of the country's total exports.

3. VICTIMS

By 21st July 2024, hospitals had recorded at least 139 protest-related deaths. Reuters reported “nearly 150” by 29th July 2024. On 5th August 2024, as Sheikh Hasina resigned, Reuters reported “hundreds” killed. In the weeks that followed, Bangladesh’s interim health ministry said more than 1,000 people were killed (statement on 29th August 2024), while **the UN human rights office later assessed up to 1,400 deaths.**(13)(14)

Modus operandi: curfew and army deployment nationwide from 19-20 July (with “Shoot-on-sight” orders); police crowd control with tear gas, rubber bullets, and live ammunition in multiple incidents ; mass arrests and campus raids were reported.



Students during a quota reform movement in Bangladesh, on 6 July 2024

4. OUTCOME

- **21 July 2024:** Supreme Court scraps most job quotas (93% merit).(15)
- **5 August 2024:** Hasina resigns and leaves the country in a chopper; army announces interim process.
- **8 August 2024:** Muhammad Yunus sworn in as chief adviser of the interim government.
- **11 May 2025:** The interim government bans all activities of Sheikh Hasina’s Awami League under the Anti-Terrorism Act, citing national security concerns.
- **26 September 2025:** Interim leader Yunus addresses the UN, signaling priorities (Rohingya, reform).
- **11 December 2025:** Authorities announce parliamentary elections for 12th February 2026 and a referendum alongside the vote on the “July Charter” reforms.

IV. NEPAL - GEN-Z AGAINST CORRUPTION

Period: 8th-19th September 2025 | youth-led; anti-corruption; social-media ban

1. CONTEXT

A youth-driven, cross-class protest wave surged in early September 2025 after the government blocked dozens of social-media platforms and outrage grew over corruption and “nepo-baby” displays of wealth. Demonstrations concentrated around Kathmandu’s parliament area and spread nationwide. The **cycle culminated in the 9 September 2025 resignation of Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli** and the appointment of former chief justice Sushila Karki to lead a transitional government.(16)(17)(18)

2. FORMS OF PROTEST

- Mass rallies centered on Maitighar/New Baneshwor (Parliament) in Kathmandu with diffusion to other cities; some attempts to storm state buildings, plus arson/vandalism on 9th September when the curfew was announced; youth defied it in parts of the capital.
- **Online coordination despite platform blocks** (VPNs, Discord/Instagram); with student and content-creator networks (influencers, meme pages, streamers, YouTubers/TikTokers and their follower communities) sharing calls to protest; **pop-culture symbols** to unify messaging (*One Piece*; three-finger salute from *The Hunger Games*).⁽¹⁹⁾ Nepal is **emblematic of this online/offline hybrid**: platform restrictions helped catalyse turnout; youth networks experimented with collective selection of interim leadership; and the legitimacy of institutions was debated in real time across both arenas.



Nepalese Gen Z protesters in front of Bharatpur mahanagarpalika office, 9 September 2025

3. VICTIMS

By December 2025, official estimates report **77 deaths and more than 2,000 injuries** linked to the September 2025 protest cycle; earlier official counts raised the toll to 72 by 14 September. Figures vary by cut-off date and inclusion criteria, and include protesters as well as other categories (including police personnel and prisoners in early reporting).

Modus operandi : Tear gas, batons, rubber bullets and, in multiple incidents, live ammunition. Soldiers patrolled/guarded key sites under curfew.

4. OUTCOME

- **9 September 2025**: Prime Minister Oli resigns amid nationwide unrest; caretaker/interim arrangements begin.
- **13 September 2025**: Parliament is dissolved and early elections are announced for 5th March 2026 under the interim government.
- **19 September 2025**: Interim PM Karki pledges anti-corruption drive, jobs, and governance reforms.
- **13 December 2025**: Oli's party holds a major rally and petitions the Supreme Court to restore parliament.

V. INDONESIA - A DISILLUSIONED GENERATION PROTESTS

Period: August 2025 – September 2025 | student-led; anti-elite; unified demands

1. CONTEXT

Outrage over excessive lawmakers' perks (notably a housing allowance of USD 3.000/month) amid living-cost pressure sparked the protest. A nationwide, youth-centered protest cycle erupted on 25 August 2025, and protests escalated sharply after ride-hailing driver Affan Kurniawan (21) was run over and killed by a police armoured vehicle near parliament on Thursday 28 August 2025. Mobilisation spread across more than 30 provinces, with **students, workers, and influencers coalescing around the "17+8" platform** (17 immediate + 8 longer-term demands).(21)(22)(23)

2. FORMS OF PROTEST

- Mass marches at national and regional parliaments; road blockades.
- Campus-adjacent rallies, night sit-ins, first-aid and legal support posts.
- Digital amplification by influencers to disseminate the 17+8 demands; pop-culture symbols to unify messaging (*One Piece*; three-finger salute from *The Hunger Games*).



Demonstration in Medan, Indonesia, 29 August 2025

3. VICTIMS

By mid-October 2025, Reuters reports **10 deaths and about 5,000 arrests** nationwide since 25 August 2025 (tallies vary by reporting cut-off). (24)

Modus operandi: Indonesian National Police (Polri) including Brimob (Mobile Brigade) for crowd control. Documented use of tear gas, water cannon, rubber bullets.

4. OUTCOME

- **31 August 2025:** Government cuts lawmakers' perks and suspends overseas trips.(25)
- **3 September 2025:** Authorities fire a police officer involved in the armoured-vehicle incident linked to Affan Kurniawan's death.
- **5–9 September 2025:** Authorities announce disciplinary action against police officers involved (including at least one dismissal); politically, the government is weakened but holds as mobilisation fragments, with some groups slowing or pausing calls to protest to avoid escalation.
- **13 October 2025:** One month after concessions on perks, Reuters reports lawmakers receive a sharp increase in "recess allowance," triggering renewed backlash and reinforcing perceptions of elite resilience after the protest wave.

VI. MOROCCO - "GEN-Z 212"

Period: 27 September 2025 – present | youth-led; healthcare & education; digital coordination

1. CONTEXT

A decentralized youth movement calling itself GenZ 212 launched nationwide protests **after outrage over public-service failures, especially healthcare, spilled online into street actions from 27 September 2025**. Anger spiked after reports of eight maternal deaths at an Agadir public hospital. The cycle intensified spreading beyond Rabat to cities in Souss-Massa, the north, and major urban centers. Grievances focus on service quality, inequality, and perceived spending priorities. Crowds re-mobilised 9-10 Oct ahead of/paralleling the King's parliamentary address; the speech called for faster social reforms and jobs, explicitly acknowledging disparities.(25)(26)(27)

2. FORMS OF PROTEST

- Cross-city marches and road blockades near administrative sites.
- Night-time rallies with sporadic rioting, arson, and clashes in some locales.
- Online coordination via TikTok/Instagram/Discord; rapid diffusion of calls; pop-culture symbols to unify messaging (*One Piece*; three-finger salute from *The Hunger Games*).
- Call to non-violence and negotiation with the government.

3. VICTIMS

By early October 2025, authorities said **security forces shot and killed three youths** in Lq liaa near Agadir during unrest; protests across several cities included riots, property damage, and hundreds of arrests and injuries (exact totals vary by source and time window).

Modus operandi: Police and Royal Gendarmerie (with Auxiliary Forces, paramilitary internal-security units under the Interior Ministry, typically deployed for crowd control and public-order support, present in public reporting) used tear gas, batons, rubber bullets; live fire reported in Lqliâa (Agadir area).

4. OUTCOME

- **2 October 2025:** Government signals parliamentary discussion on healthcare/service delivery amid public pressure.(28)
- **10 October 2025:** King's speech urges speeded-up social reforms (jobs, services, regional disparities).(29)
- **11 October 2025:** GenZ 212 announces a temporary suspension to reorganize.
- **18 October 2025:** Protests resume in Rabat with peaceful sit-ins near Parliament.
- **29 October 2025:** Authorities seek prosecution of over 2,400 people linked to the protest wave.
- **10 December 2025:** In Rabat and seven other Moroccan cities, Gen-Z 212 resurfaced for the first time in nearly two months to demand the release of the 2,480 people facing prosecution. In Casablanca, at least two protesters were arrested and later released in the evening.



Demonstration led by young people in Casablanca, Morocco, 5 October 2025

VII. PERU - GEN-Z AGAINST PENSION REFORM

Period: September 2025–16 October 2025 | youth; pensions; anti-corruption

1. CONTEXT

A youth-led protest wave reignited in September 2025 after **Peru enacted a pension reform requiring every adult to enroll in a public or private scheme (phased in from 1st June 2027)**. Discontent reflects anger over corruption, rising crime, and the lack of accountability for killings during the 2022-2023 crackdown. mobilisation peaked again around 20-28 September 2025 in Lima and regional cities.(30)

2. FORMS OF PROTEST

- Student/youth-led rallies centred in downtown Lima (Govt/Parliament axis) with weekend peaks.
- Sectoral joiners (transport and merchant unions) on later dates; mining disruption reported (Hudbay mill).
- Campus/downtown rallies; policing with tear gas and rubber pellets.(31)
- Online calls by Gen-Z collectives; pop-culture symbols to unify messaging (*One Piece*; three-finger salute from *The Hunger Games*).

3. VICTIMS

Between 20-29 September 2025, **at least 19-30 people were injured (including several journalists and a police officer)** amid clashes in central Lima; figures vary by incident window and reporting source. One protest-related death was confirmed on 16 October 2025.

Modus operandi: Peruvian National Police (PNP) riot units. Tactics documented: tear gas, non-lethal projectiles (rubber/pellet), kettling/barrier lines, and arrests during dispersals. While Peru had earlier military support to police for crime states of emergency in 2025, current reporting focuses mainly on PNP riot-police crowd-control operations in central Lima rather than sustained military deployments.

4. OUTCOME

- **5 September 2025:** Government publishes pension-reform regulation (DS-189-2025-EF): mandatory enrollment from 1 June 2027; staged implementation.
- **10-11 October 2025:** Congress impeaches Dina Boluarte and José Jerí is sworn in; protests continue under the new interim president.(32)
- **16 October 2025:** fresh clashes near Congress in Lima; 1 protester killed (gunshot) and dozens injured as unrest persists.(33)
- **22 October 2025:** Interim President José Jerí declares a 30-day state of emergency in Lima and Callao, allowing armed forces support for police.
- **20-21 November 2025:** The government extends the state of emergency for a further 30 days (effective from 21 November), according to official reporting.



Gen-Z demonstration in Peru, 15 October 2025

VIII. PHILIPPINES - "TRILLION PESO MARCH"

Period: 12 September 2025 – present | youth–church coalition; flood-control scandal; accountability

1. CONTEXT

A broad coalition of students, church groups, civic and business associations, and local communities mobilised **after revelations of large-scale anomalies in ₱545 billion (\$9.22 billion USD) worth of flood-control and other infrastructure projects since 2022**. Mass rallies peaked on 21 September 2025 in Metro Manila and regional cities, even though the government had created an independent investigative commission on 11 September 2025. (34)(35)

2. FORMS OF PROTEST

- Large, mostly peaceful rallies anchored at Rizal Park (Luneta) and the EDSA Shrine/People Power Monument, with church groups, students and civic coalitions; sister rallies in other cities. (36)
- Localised clashes near Mendiola/Recto/Ayala Bridge on Sept 21 (stone-throwing, barricade fires, isolated vandalism/looting).(37)

3. VICTIMS

Credible reports indicate **one protest-related death** (stabbing near Mendiola on 22 September 2025), **hundreds of arrests** (more than 200 cited in some reports), and **dozens of police injuries** during Manila clashes on 21 September. Tallies vary by outlet and time window, so figures remain provisional.

Modus operandi: Philippine National Police (PNP), Manila Police District/NCRPO riot units; SWAT later arrived at hot spots. Documented tactics include water cannon dispersals; claims of tear-gas/projectile use circulated, which PNP officially denied (no gunshots/tear gas).



Baha sa Luneta protests and the associated pre-rally program at the University of the Philippines Diliman, 21 September 2025

4. OUTCOME

- **31 August 2025:** Public Works chief Manuel Bonoan resigns; Vince Dizon appointed to lead a department “sweep.”(38)
- **11 September 2025:** President Marcos Jr. forms an independent commission to probe project anomalies.(39)
- **21-22 September 2025:** Nationwide protests; arrests and injuries reported; one protester killed by stabbing.(40)
- **30 November 2025:** Bonifacio’s day : Tens of thousands marched in Manila, from Luneta to near the presidential palace.
- **1-14 December 2025:** The flood-control scandal triggered resignations and a tougher government crackdown, signalling that corruption networks were starting to lose ground.

IX. MADAGASCAR - GEN-Z AGAINST PRECARIOUSNESS

Period: 25 September 2025 – mid-October 2025 | service failures; youth-led; anti-corruption

1. CONTEXT

Rolling power and water outages in Antananarivo triggered youth-led protests from 25 September 2025, directly inspired by the recent events in Nepal; anger widened to governance and corruption. Outrage over chronic power cuts and water shortages, framed as symptoms of corruption and mismanagement, rapidly broadened into calls for President Andry Rajoelina to resign. Demonstrations spread from the capital to cities such as Toliara and Antsiranana, drawing students, high-schoolers, and civic actors.(41)

2. FORMS OF PROTEST

- City marches, attempts to gather at Ambohitovoo, a neighbourhood of Antananarivo); neighborhood road barricades.(42)
- Campus-centred youth rallies, livestreams, and Telegram/Instagram mobilisation despite curfews; pop-culture symbols to unify messaging (*One Piece*; three-finger salute from *The Hunger Games*).
- Rights-group hotlines and documentation; police dispersal with teargas and mass arrests.(43)

3. VICTIMS

As of 6 October 2025, the UN reported **at least 22 people killed and more than 100 injured** since 25 September. Local reporting also notes injuries among police and bystanders during clashes and looting episodes. The prudent order of magnitude is dozens killed and hundreds injured, pending verified, incident-level accounting.

Modus operandi: operations run under a joint police-military security command. Tactics: tear gas and rubber bullets reported; mass arrests during dispersals; nightly curfew imposed in the capital... until the army joined the protesters.



A young protester holds up a placard showing his affiliation with the movement leading the struggle. Antananarivo, Madagascar, 27/09/2025 ©AFP - Rijasolo

4. OUTCOME

- **29 September 2025:** President Rajoelina dissolves the government after days of youth-led unrest; dusk-to-dawn curfews follow in the capital.(44)
- **6 October 2025:** He appoints Gen. Ruphin Fortunat Zafisambo as prime minister, signalling a securitized stabilization strategy.(45)
- **12-14 October 2025:** elite CAPSAT (*Corps Armée des Personnels et Services Administratifs et Techniques*) units and parts of the gendarmerie sided with protesters; the presidency warned of an attempted coup; President Rajoelina fled the country; he later attempted to dissolve the National Assembly.(46)(47)(48)
- **17 October 2025:** Colonel Michael Randrianirina is sworn in as president after the military takeover.
- **25 October 2025:** New authorities revoke former President Andry Rajoelina's Malagasy nationality, citing dual nationality rules.
- **28 October 2025:** The military-led transition appoints a mostly civilian cabinet under Prime Minister Herintsalama Rajaonarivelo; Col. Michael Randrianirina says the transition will run for up to two years until elections can be organised.
- **17 November 2025:** Randrianirina's first national address lays out a roadmap with nationwide consultations led by the Council of Christian Churches in Madagascar (FFKM), followed by a referendum and a presidential election within two years; he also announces plans for a new Youth Assembly.



Protestor holding up a T-shirt with a Gen-Z logo, Peru, 25 November 2025

X. OPERATIONAL LESSONS

A mobilisation frame rooted in lived injustice

Gen-Z movements are most effective when they build around concrete grievances that people feel every day: unfair recruitment in Bangladesh or failing public hospitals in Morocco show how practical injustices can become powerful entry points for wider political demands.

Task-based organisation that works without a single leader

Gen-Z movements often **coordinate effectively when responsibilities are shared rather than centralised.** In Indonesia, the “17+8” demands were drafted collectively by student unions, and in Nepal, youth networks on Discord and Instagram experimented with shared decision-making. These experiences show that distributing tasks across many actors can keep a movement coherent without needing one recognised leader.

Digital governance as a strategic battleground

Platform bans and internet shutdowns now shape protest dynamics as much as street policing. Nepal’s social-media ban helped trigger mobilisation, while Bangladesh’s blackout forced organisers to rebuild offline networks, showing that online restrictions can both slow down and spark collective action.

Symbolic anchors paired with sustained pressure

Recognisable symbols give movements coherence, while repeated actions build leverage. The GotaGoGama camp in Sri Lanka or the rallies centred on Luneta in the Philippines show how a fixed anchor can structure mobilisation over time.

Coalitions that extend beyond youth circles

Protests gain political weight when they broaden beyond students. Indonesian mobilisations expanded once workers and drivers joined, and church networks amplified youth demands in the Philippines, illustrating how alliances increase resilience and visibility.

Planning for the “day after” from the outset

Transitions move quickly, and outcomes depend on whether protesters have a clear next step. Nepal’s leadership change immediately required a reform roadmap, while Madagascar showed how vacuums invite stronger actors, underscoring the need for even a minimal transition plan.

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- (42) Reuters, "*Madagascar president warns of coup attempt as more soldiers join protests*" (October 12, 2025).
- (43) Reuters, "*Madagascar President Rajoelina to address nation on Monday evening*" (October 13, 2025).
- (44) Reuters, "*Madagascar president dissolves national assembly, escalating crisis*" (October 14, 2025)