

Comoros President injured in knife attack

December 17, 2024

December 17, 2024: Moroni, Comoros: President **AZALI Assoumani** was attacked with a Kitchen knife by a 24-year soldier, when the President was attending the funeral of a religious leader in the town of **Salimani**. A civilian was also injured during the attack while attempting to protect the President.

President Azali Assoumani's injuries were not serious and he returned to his home, after the attack.

"The attacker was subdued by the president's security agents and was handed over to investigators," public prosecutor **Djounaid** told reporters.



AZALI Assoumani (b. December 31, 1959 in Mitsoudjé, Grande Comore)

Mitsoudjé is shown in the MAP on page 2.

<https://www.beit-salam.km/>

The attacker was identified as **Ahmed Abdou**. The prison authorities said he had been discovered, a day later, “unresponsive” in a cell where he was being held and was declared dead. He said an investigation was underway into the attacker's motive and the circumstances of his death while in custody.

The attack happened in the town of Salimani on the outskirts of the capital Moroni.



MAP 8: NGAZIDJA (Grande Comore), the largest island in Comoros

Reference: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-Grande-Comoros-and-location-of-the-studied-villagesSource-Wikimedia_fig2_308129674

---- A BACKGROUNDER on President **AZALI Assoumani** of COMOROS ISLANDS ----

Assoumani became the President of the Council of State of the Comoros in 1999 after overthrowing interim President **Tadjidine Ben Said Massoude** in a coup d'état.

His troops justified the coup on the basis of protecting territorial integrity of Comoros, after **Massoude** had begun negotiations with representatives of the island of **Anjouan** for greater autonomy or independence. This was despite the fact that an international conference in **Antananarivo**, the capital city of **Madagascar** had resulted in a settlement on the matter between the three islands of the **Comoros**, although the government of **Anjouan** had delayed ratifying the agreement.

The NEW CONSTITUTION: On 23 December 2001, **Assoumani's** new proposed constitution was adopted by referendum. The constitution established a rotating presidency and granted considerable autonomy to the three major Comorian islands, each of which gained its own basic law, flag and executive branch of government. It also renamed the country from the Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros to the Union of the Comoros and redesigned the national flag to remove its religious inscriptions and become multicolor, as can be seen today.

FIRST ELECTION under the NEW CONSTITUTION: **Assoumani** announced elections for 2002, with violent clashes, between state forces and the opposition, erupting across the country during the campaign. Reports of arbitrary arrests also emerged. **Assoumani** resigned from his position as President of the Council of State on 21 January 2002, in order to run for President of the Union of the Comoros and was succeeded by Hamada Madi. **Assoumani** was then elected President with 75% of the vote in the multiparty 2002 Comorian presidential election, and was inaugurated on 26 May 2002.

Assoumani's presidency was marked by conflicts over jurisdiction and political gridlock due to his refusal to devolve power to the autonomous regions of the Comoros, as mandated by the constitution. The latter also required that successive presidents be from different islands. Accordingly, **Ahmed Abdallah Mohamed Sambi** from **Anjouan** became the President after winning the 2006 presidential election.

Assoumani launched a second presidential bid in the 2016 presidential election. In the first round on 21 February, 2016, he came third with 14.96% of the vote, before winning the second round with 40.98% of the vote on 10 April. However, both **Assoumani** and his opponent **Mohamed Ali Solihi** disputed the election result, alleging irregularities and electoral fraud in the second round. **Assoumani** demanded the invalidation of ballots from most of the polling stations on **Anjouan** in particular. Consequently, a third round of voting took place on 11 May, 2016. The Constitutional Court declared **Assoumani** the winner with 41.43% of the vote on 15 May, and he took office on 26 May for a five-year term.

During this term, in three years, **Assoumani** changed his Vice-President three times: His first vice-president was Djaffar Ahmed Said, the former attorney-general and director of judicial affairs, who was later replaced by Moustadroine Aboudou from Anjouan and then Abdallah Said Sarouma from Mohéli.

SURREPTIOUS CHANGE in CONSTITUTION: The opposition accused **Assoumani** of having amended the constitution to remain in power until 2029. In addition, his closing of the **Constitutional Court** and **Anti-Corruption Court** caused the **European Union** to suspend all cooperation with the **Comoros** in protest.

2019 ELECTION under the MODIFIED CONSTITUTION: On 13 February 2019, **Assoumani** resigned the presidency to campaign for re-election in the 2019 Comorian presidential election on 24 March 2019. He was elected in the first round and assumed office again on 3 April 2019.

Assoumani was reelected as president of Comoros in January 2024 in a vote denounced by opposition parties as fraudulent. At least one person died in unrest following the election in **Moroni**.

CHANGING the RULES or the CONSTITUTION: On 7 August 2024, **Assoumani** granted extensive powers to his son and presumed successor **Nour El Fath**, allowing him to intervene at several stages of the government decision-making process.

Editorial comments: The assessment by www.DiGiNews360.com is that **Assoumani** will remain power up to 2029. After **2029**, his son **Nour El Fath** may succeed him. The changes in the constitution and the rules after 2016 also look to be without any transparent process. The UNO, the EU and the African Union must intervene to bring Comoros back to a constitutional path.

---- A BACKGROUNDER on COMOROS ISLANDS ----

Union of the Comoros, an archipelagic country made up of **three major islands**, and numerous smaller islands, in South-Eastern Africa, located at the Northern end of the **Mozambique Channel** in the Indian Ocean.

Its capital and largest city is **Moroni**.

The GROUPE D'ALDABRA is located about 360 Km North of **Madagascar**, and **belongs** to the so-called **Outer Islands of the Seychelles**.

The **Glorioso islands belong to France**.

The island of **Mayotte** (shown in white in the MAP on page 5) is administered by France as an overseas department.

The country, which is made up of an archipelago of islands off the East coast of Africa, has experienced more than a dozen coups or attempted coups since independence from France in 1975.

The Union of the Comoros is a member state of the **African Union**, the **Organisation internationale de la Francophonie** and the **Organisation of Islamic Co-operation**.

The country has three official languages: **Shikomori, French** and **Arabic**.



MAP 7: Union of the Comoros, Independence Day: 6 July 1975

Population: 0.85 Mn, Area: 1,659 Km² (3rd smallest African country by area)

GDP (2023 Estimate): \$1.364 Bn, GDP/capita: \$1,377

The largest city, federal capital, and seat of the government of the **Union of the Comoros: Moroni** (means "*at the river*" in Shingazidja). Population of **Moroni** in 2003: 41,557 residents.

After independence, **Comoros** has experienced more than 20 coups or attempted coups, with various heads of state assassinated.

Between 2009 and 2014, about **19% of the population lived below the international poverty line** of US\$1.90 a day by purchasing power parity.



MAP 8: Union of the Comoros: Three Major Islands: NGAZIDJA (Grande Comore), MOILI or Mwali (Moheli) and NDZOUANI or Nzwani (Anjouan)

*The island of Mayotte (White in SouthEast of the map) is administered and claimed by **France**.*

The constitution provided for the Presidency to be rotated among the three islands. However, the constitution was changed, to remove this provision, by President **Azali Assoumani** during his presidency of May 26, 2016 to 2021.