

# Union of the Comoros



## SUMMARY

Comoros is a set of islands where the influence of the Arabs and Persians is evident where most of the population is Sunni Muslim. The country is densely populated with nearly 350 people per square mile. Many people possessing Comoran citizenship live abroad (mostly in France) to seek a better quality of life, job opportunities, higher education, and better health care. Much of its remittances are spend on private consumption, but this often goes towards luxury goods and does not contribute to poverty reduction.

Chief of State: President Azali Assoumani (May 26, 2016)

Head of Government: (same as above)

Capital: Moroni

Other notable cities: Mutsamudu, Domoni, Fomboni, Karthala

Gov Type: Federal Presidential Republic

Population: 900,141

Colonial History: Persians are thought to have arrived (time period unknown) establishing Sunni Islam in the country. Later, French took over the islands from 1886-1887 and it became an overseas territory of France in 1947. Three of the islands gained independence in 1975.

## GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Comoros is composed of four islands (Anjouan, Moheli, Grande Comore, and Mayotte, although Mayotte voted to remain a part of France). Located in Southern Africa, it is at the northern mouth of the Mozambique Channel, nearly two-thirds of the way between northern Madagascar and northern Mozambique. It is 2,235 sq km in total, all if it land. Its coastline runs at 340 km.

Comoros is characterized as a tropical marine climate, with a rainy season running from November to May. It is composed of volcanic islands, with its interiors varying from extremely steep mountains to low rising hills.

Most of Comoros' land is agricultural (84.4%), with forest being used at 1.4% and 'other' at 14.2%. Much of its population is located in Maroni and it tends to suffer from cyclones during the rainy season and volcanic activity on the Grand Comore.



## DEMOGRAPHICS

Noun: Comoran(s)

Adjective: Comoran

Ethnic Groups: Antalote, Cafre, Makoa, Oimatsaha, Sakalava

Languages: Arabic (official), French (official), Shikomoro (official)

Religions: Muslim 98.1% (overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim, small Shia Muslim and Ahmadiyya Muslim populations), ethnic religionist 1.1%, Christian 0.6%, other 0.3%

Comoros is densely populated, with about 350 people per square mile, with Anjouan being the most densely populated. Most of its land is dedicated to agriculture, so the habitable land is increasingly crowded. Increasing population pressure on land and resources, widespread poverty, and poor job prospects motivates many Comorans to attempt to illegally migrate to Mayotte. Most Comorans live abroad, mostly in France, to seek a better quality of life and education.

## ECONOMY AND GDP

Comoros is a small trade-based economy with declining remittances. It has new structural and fiscal reforms and manageable debts. It has a fragile liquidity environment and a large foreign direct investment, with state-owned enterprises suffering.

Real GDP: \$2.716 billion (2022)

Real GDP Growth Rate: 2.39% (2022)

Real GDP Per Capita: \$3,200 (2022)

GDP (Official Exchange Rate): \$1.243 billion (2022)

GDP Composition: Agriculture 47.7% (2017), Industry 11.8% (2017), and Services 40.5% (2017).

Inflation Rate: 1% (2022)

Industries: Fishing, tourism, and perfume distillation.

Labor Force: 229,000 (2022).

Unemployment Rate: 5.75%, youth unemployment rate stands at 21.7% (2022).

Population Below Poverty Line: 42.4% (2019)

Public Debt: 32.4% of GDP (2017)

Exports: \$165.347 million (partners include Turkey, India, United Arab Emirates, United States of America, and Indonesia) 2022 est.

Imports: \$479.94 million (partners include United Arab Emirates, China, India, France, and Tanzania) 2022 est.

## MAIN POLITICAL CONTENTIONS

Comoros shares maritime borders with Mozambique, Madagascar, Tanzania, and Seychelles, all of which play a crucial role in shaping the economic, political, and cultural landscape of Comoros.

Comoros maintains relations with the United Arab Emirates, with the relations growing stronger in each sector. The United Arab Emirates has delivered financial support to Comoros since 1979 and the Dh436 million has been invested into the country to support its infrastructure and economic growth. Comoros has spoken of co-operation to reduce carbon emissions in order to achieve carbon neutrality in the archipelago.

Comoros was in talks to normalize relations with Israel as of 2022, although the current situation in Gaza has halted these normalizations. This was initiated by the United States in 2021 as they were hoping to establish diplomatic ties between Comoros and Israel. This comes despite the legal action that Comoros pursued against Israel in 2013 over the deaths of citizens on board the Mavi Marmara.

In 2021, Comoros also discussed bilateral relations with Egypt. This also led to the idea increasing the role of Egyptian companies engaged in implementing projects of 2030 Plan for Emerging Comoros. Diplomats involved in the discussion agreed to maintain coordination for various peace and security issues in Africa.

# Economy and Politics

# COMOROS: A TIMELINE

President Massoude is ousted in a coup led by Colonel Azali Assoumani who serves as President from 2002-2006 after being voted in during the 2002 elections. In 2001, a military committee seizes power in Anjouan with the goal of rejoining the Comoros and a new constitution is established reunited the three islands as one country, but allowing each greater autonomy. In 2006, Ahmen Abdallah Mohamed Sambi is elected President, but in 2007 the AU sends troops to keep peace after June elections in which President Mohamed Bacar refused to step down wanted to be separate from Comoros. The AU then begins a naval blockaded of Anjouan Island before recapturing it in 2008 with the help of Comoran troops.

1999-2008

In 2013, Dhoinine said that a coup was attempted, but was averted when security forces foiled the plot. Alleged conspirators were arrested, with some escaping to Mayotte. In 2015, Legislative elections were held and Dhoinine's Union for the Development of Comoros (UPDC) took the most seats in the election. In 2016, another Presidential election is held and Mohamed Ali Soilihi comes in first with more than 17% of the vote. Assoumani is declared the winner of the second round, however, and many reports of isolated violence and voting irregularities led to the polls being rerun. However, the results confirmed Assoumani's victory and he was inaugurated on May 26, 2016.

2013-2016

The next set of elections were held early, in 2019. Allegations of irregularities and fraud surfaced on election day and many international observer groups criticized the electoral process, but Assoumani was declared winner of the presidential poll despite this. The opposition disputed this, calling for a new election to be held, and formed a National Transitional Council to resolve the country's political crisis, with Assoumani's removal from office among its goals.

2019

The reelection of Assoumani leads to multiple demonstrations that protest the results throughout the capital. Protestors are met with tear gas to disperse them. The UPR also announced its plan to examine the human rights record of the Comoros.

Present

1993-1998

Comoros joins the League of Arab States in 1993. In 1996, Mohamed Abdulkarim Taki is elected as President, where he then drafts a constitution establishing Islam as the basis of law. In 1997, Anjouan and Moheli declare independence from the Comoros, although this was not internationally recognized. The following year of 1998, Tadjidine Ben Said Massoude becomes President after the death of Mohamed Taki Abdoukarim.

2009-2011

The Island of Mayotte votes to become part of France once more, although Comoros terms the referendum null and void. In 2010, Ikililou Dhoinine wins the Presidential elections and becomes President, although there were multiple allegations of fraud. Dhoinine was later inaugurated in 2011.

2018

Assoumani suspends the country's Constitutional Court on claims that is dysfunctional, with opposition criticizing the move. He then announced that a constitutional referendum would be held in July and proposed changes in the single-term federal presidency system as well as ending Comoros' secular status and declaring Islam the state religion. Despite a opposition boycott, the electoral commission declared that 93% of voters supported the referendum measures. This was disputed by opposition leaders, but later the government began to crackdown on opposition due to a short-lived rebellion in Anjouan.

2021-2023

The ruling Convention for the Renewal of Comoros and other allied candidates win ever seat in the January and February Legislative elections, but these were disputed by an opposition boycott and disagreements. A Human Rights Report that was begun in 2020 is still in progress by the United States Department of State by 2023.