

Struggling for Our Fundamental Rights: The Exiled People of the Chagos Archipelago

Background

- In the 1970s, the US Government created a military base on the Indian Ocean island Diego Garcia in the British-controlled Chagos Archipelago.
- Prior to the base's creation, the US Government convinced and secretly paid the UK \$14 million to forcibly remove the indigenous Chagossian people of Diego Garcia and the Chagos Archipelago.
- Numbering around 2,000, the Chagossians were deported and discarded in abject poverty 1,200 miles away in the slums of the Indian Ocean islands of Mauritius and the Seychelles.
- Since their expulsion, Chagossians have been barred from returning to their homeland and remain deeply impoverished.
- Although the US Government ordered and orchestrated the expulsion and paid the UK Government to carry it out, the US Government has abdicated its responsibility for the appalling conditions of the Chagossians and has repeatedly covered up its instrumental role in their exile.
- In 2012, more than 30,000 people signed a petition to the White House demanding the US Government recognize the wrongs committed against the Chagossians. Unfortunately, the Obama administration again refused to accept US responsibility for wrongfully expelling the Chagossians from their homeland.
- In late 2014, the 2-year period to renegotiate the Diego Garcia base agreement commenced with the initial 50-year term expiring in 2016. While the bilateral executive agreement is subject to an automatic 20-year renewal, the renegotiations are a pivotal moment to redress the harm done to the Chagossians.

Our Aims

- The Chagossians are not calling for the removal of the base on Diego Garcia or challenging its existence.
- The Chagossians are asking the US Government to state publicly that it recognizes Chagossians' basic right to live in their homeland and that it does not oppose the resettlement of Chagossians on Diego Garcia and in the rest of the Chagos Archipelago, with equal rights to work on the base.

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