

Nobel Laureates Letter
Urging President Barack H. Obama to Bring Justice to the Exiled Chagossian People

Dear Mr. President,

In the last days of your presidency, we write to you as fellow Nobel Laureates to urge you to correct the historic injustice suffered by the Chagossian people, who have been living in impoverished exile for almost fifty years. The Chagossians were displaced from their homes on the British-controlled island of Diego Garcia to make way for a U.S. military base. For decades, Chagossians have asked for the right to go home. In November, the people were devastated when the U.K. said it would not allow a return despite a U.K. government-funded study showing that resettlement is feasible. Only you now have the power to help the Chagossians return to their ancestral homeland and, in the process, cement your legacy as a defender of human rights.

We must emphasize that Chagossians are *not* asking you to close or alter the U.S. base. They are only asking to be allowed to return to their islands to live in peaceful coexistence with the base.

The Chagossians' ancestors first came to the Chagos Archipelago as enslaved Africans and indentured Indians. From around the time of the American Revolution until their displacement, generations of Chagossians lived on the islands cultivating a proud culture.

In a 1966 U.S./U.K. agreement, the U.S. promised the U.K. \$14 million for basing rights and the removal of all Chagossians from Diego Garcia. Between 1968 and 1973, British agents, assisted by U.S. Navy personnel, deported the Chagossians 1,200 miles away to slums on the islands of Mauritius and the Seychelles. The Chagossians received no resettlement assistance.

Since their expulsion, the Chagossians have been living in profound poverty and struggling to return to their homeland. Sadly, previous U.S. and U.K. administrations have blocked any resettlement and largely ignored the people's suffering.

Recently, support for a return has been building worldwide. Civilians live next to U.S. bases worldwide, and military experts agree resettlement would pose no security risk on Diego Garcia. This year's extension of the 1966 U.S./U.K. agreement provides the ideal opportunity to honor the Chagossians' right to live in their homeland. Thus, we ask you:

- (1) To publicly state that the U.S. does not oppose the Chagossians returning to their islands;
- (2) To recognize Chagossians' basic right to live in their homeland with equal rights to compete for civilian jobs on the base;
- (3) To provide reasonable assistance for Chagossians' resettlement and assistance in seeking employment on the base;
- (4) To guarantee and enshrine these rights in the U.S./U.K. base agreement; and
- (5) To begin direct negotiations with Chagossian representatives on these issues.

You have the power to rectify this historic injustice. You have the power to show the world that the U.S. upholds basic human rights. Please help ensure that justice is done for the Chagossians.

Sincerely,

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