

## **Experts' Letter to Prime Minister Boris Johnson and President Donald J. Trump Supporting the Exiled Chagossian People**

22 November 2019

Dear Prime Minister Boris Johnson and President Donald J. Trump,

We are a group of scholars, military and international relations analysts, and other experts who are writing in support of the exiled Chagossian people. As you know, the Chagossians have been struggling for more than 50 years to return to their homeland in the Indian Ocean's Chagos Archipelago since the UK and US governments expelled the people between 1968 and 1973 during construction of the US/UK military base on the Chagossians' island Diego Garcia.

We support the Chagos Refugees Group's call to "condemn the illegal occupation of [the] Chagos Archipelago by the British government" following the United Nations General Assembly Resolution adopted 22 May 2019 by a 116–6 vote.

We support Chagossians today protesting the end of the six-month deadline by which the UN ordered the United Kingdom 1) to "withdraw its colonial administration" from the Chagos Archipelago, 2) to acknowledge that the Chagos Archipelago "forms an integral part" of the former UK colony Mauritius; and 3) "to cooperate with Mauritius in facilitating the resettlement" of Chagossians.

We support the Chagos Refugees Group's call for the UK government to show "respect for [the] United Nations" and for the International Court of Justice judgement of 25 February 2019 that called UK rule in the Chagos Archipelago "unlawful" and ordered the UK to "end its administration of the Chagos Archipelago as rapidly as possible."

We emphasize that the US government shares responsibility for the Chagossians' expulsion into impoverished exile: The US government paid the UK government \$14 million for basing rights and the removal of all Chagossians from Diego Garcia and the rest of the Chagos islands. We call on the US government to publicly state that it does not oppose Chagossians returning to their islands and to assist Chagossians in returning home.

We note the Chagos Refugees Group is not asking to close the base. They simply want the right to return home to live in peaceful coexistence with the base, where some want to work. The Mauritian government has said it will allow the US/UK base to continue to operate. Civilians live next to US bases worldwide; military experts agree resettlement would pose no security risk.

We support the Chagos Refugees Group in saying the UK and US governments cannot continue "to banish [Chagossians'] fundamental right" to live in their homeland. You have the power to rectify this historic injustice. You have the power to show the world that the UK and US uphold basic human rights. We agree with Chagossians "that justice needs to be done" and that "it's time to put an end to [their] suffering."

Sincerely,

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Supporting the Exiled Chagossian People**

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