

Abstract – Louis Elyse

Why I believe in self-determination for Chagossians

I was born in exile in Mauritius to two Chagossian parents and came to the UK in June 2003. On arrival I had to sleep for a week at Gatwick Airport and for a week outside social services in Crawley. There was no-one to help me at the time so now I am helping the Chagossian community in Manchester and around the world. I am the leader of the Manchester Chagos Archipelago Community group and an executive member of Chagossian Voices

I don't believe Chagos should be handed back to Mauritius, as per the International Court ruling because Chagossians are not of Mauritian origin as the ruling would have us believe. Chagossians were brought directly to the islands and are only connected to Mauritius via French (1793), then British (1814) colonial administration. Chagossians have no real ties to Mauritius. Chagossians are not of Mauritian origin any more than Réunion people or Seychelles people are – as those islands were also at one time administered from Mauritius. We Chagossians have our own culture, language and way of life, which differs to that of Mauritius. The Chagos Islands are also a long distance from Mauritius and are not part of the same geographical territory. Some Chagossians -such as those who went to the Seychelles -have no connection to Mauritius whatsoever -and have never set foot in Mauritius and do not consider themselves Mauritian. These Chagossians would be excluded under Mauritian sovereignty as decided by the court

Chagossians were not well treated in Mauritius. Look at Agalega – Mauritius has not learned from what it has done wrong in the past – it is evicting the population, making a similar deal with India as they did with the UK. Mauritius never gave Chagossians their rights Compensation was withheld and Chagossians needed to fight to get any support or compensation. Chagossians also suffered ethnic discrimination: Chagossians were second class citizens until 2001, when eventually British passports set them free. Chagossians were looked down on and insulted in Mauritius

Chagos should be given to the Chagossians – not to the UK or Mauritius: Chagossians, however, would have a better future with the UK. Chagossians are thriving in the UK compared to Mauritius. Chagossians are still in poverty in Mauritius.

The court needs to rehear this case with Chagossians alongside the UK and Mauritius as equal litigants with Chagossians speaking their own case and fighting for their own rights. Chagossians were better off in Chagos. In Mauritius their wellbeing and life expectancy declined dramatically. Their culture and way of life are being lost