



chagossianvoices@gmail.com

11th November 2022

*The Right Honourable James Cleverly,
Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs*

Dear Secretary of State Cleverly,

Following the announcement in Parliament on November 3rd 2022, that the UK will be opening negotiations with Mauritius about the future sovereignty of the Chagos Archipelago – and the future of the Chagossians – we are writing to inquire how and when Chagossians will be involved in these negotiations as it would appear that no Chagossian community group has yet been approached or consulted.

We write to you secure in the knowledge that the Chagossians are the ‘belongers’ on the Chagos Islands¹ (High Court, London 2000) and the indigenous inhabitants of that territory² (Pretoria Declaration 2022) and, as such, the forcibly exiled Chagossians and their descendants have a right to decide on matters related to the future of their territory which must be respected. We also note also that it is a longstanding UK Government policy that British Overseas Territories only exist with the explicit consent of their populations.³ All Chagossians are British Overseas Territories citizens. Chagossians are also an African people, and we note (African Charter on Human and People’s Rights 1981) that “All peoples shall have the right to existence. They shall have the unquestionable and inalienable right to self-determination.”⁴ We also draw your attention to the recent intervention by Human Rights Watch, which states that “consultation and participation of the Chagossian people....is crucial to these negotiations”⁵.

Chagossian Voices is a well-established and influential grassroots platform for Chagossians, communicating with thousands of Chagossians through our various online platforms. We look forward to a reply at your earliest convenience, and to the offer of a meeting with you to discuss how the involvement of the Chagossian community will be achieved.

Yours sincerely,

Frankie Bontemps, Bernadette Dugasse, Mylene Augustin, Pascalina Nellan, Louis Elyse, Jean-François Nellan

For Chagossian Voices

¹ Case No: CO/3775/98; Handed Down Judgment; In the High Court of Justice Queens Bench Division (The Administrative Court); Lord Justice Laws & Mr. Justice Gibbs; 3 November 2000.

² Pretoria Declaration: Institute of Pan-African Thought and Conversation, University of Johannesburg 5th October 2022

³ Foreign & Commonwealth Office. Secretary of State, Great Britain. Foreign, Commonwealth Office, Foreign, & Commonwealth Office Staff. (2012). The overseas territories: Security, success and sustainability (Vol. 8374). The Stationery Office.

⁴ African Charter on Human and People’s Rights. *Organisation of African Unity* 1981

⁵ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/11/08/chagos-islands-include-long-expelled-residents-negotiations>.

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