



Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Sixteenth session 17-21 July 2023

Item 3: *Study and advice on the impact of militarization on the rights of Indigenous Peoples*

Monday 17th July 2023

Frankie Bontemps: Chagossian Voices

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and gentlemen, I speak to you today as a member of the Chagossian community. We have all been forcibly removed from our homeland archipelago in the Indian Ocean to make way for a joint US/UK military facility and airbase. Our story is one filled with sorrow, displacement, and the harmful human consequences of militarization. Our people have endured the loss of our homes, our culture, our lands and our very way of life.

In the 1960s and 1970s, we the Chagossian people were forcibly uprooted from our homes without our consent by the US and the UK. We have been treated as a people with no rights and no identity and were sent against our will to Mauritius and the Seychelles, which to us were foreign lands.

The United Nations were persuaded to complete the decolonisation of the Chagos Archipelago and through decisions made in the general Assembly and at the International Court of justice in 2019, the rights to our territory are being handed to Mauritius -but without the consent of the Chagossians.

We have not been consulted. Recent actions by Mauritius concern us greatly and we wonder if a rush to decolonise at any cost may lead to worse problems for us and other Indian Ocean Creoles. We refer to the militarisation of the Mauritian dependency of Agalega where an Indian airbase is being constructed, and the exile of the people of Agalega who like us are Creoles, many of Chagossian origin.

We urge the United Nations to examine closely the case of the Chagossians and Indian Ocean creoles as a matter of urgency and the human rights abuses we have suffered and continue to endure.