

*At a crucial time for the struggle to end the illegal military occupation of Chagos,
to re-unify the country and win the right to return heads-
held-high for all Chagossians*

2nd International Conference on Diego Garcia

by LALIT

THEME:

**“Diego Garcia: 50 Years’ Occupation
& Banishment,
50 Years’ Struggle: Let’s Win!”**

LALIT's 2nd International Conference on Diego Garcia

GRNW, Port-Louis, Mauritius
October 2016

LALIT organised a 2-day international Action conference on 1-2 October in which former President of the Republic Cassam Uteem, former Attorney General Jean Claude Bibi, 5 representatives of peace organisations in the US and India (including a former US military who had in the past, been stationed on the US military base in Diego Garcia), as well as LALIT members spoke out against the UK and US military occupation of the Chagos.

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**Description of LALIT's 2nd
Conference on Diego Garcia and
Chagos**

LALIT'S HALL and adjoining veranda were full of people, all transfixed by the consistently high level of the content of the speeches – precise and to-the-point – and by the calmly committed integrity of the people giving the speeches at the LALIT Second Conference on Diego Garcia.

Visually

As they spoke, the speakers stood in front of 6 photographic tableaux, a panorama starting from the Nordvaer's last voyage to Port Louis from Chagos in 1973, through LALIT and Chagossian women's street fights with the Riot Police in 1981 demonstrations, up to the bright colour photo of a LALIT demonstration against the British 2010 ploy of a Marine Protected Area near Diego Garcia and now declared illegal by international courts. So, photographs spanning 50 years of history alongside brightly coloured banners calling for military base closure made for a striking visual back-drop. The part of the audience that had overflowed on to the veranda sat amongst some 45 photographs of the history of the struggle against Chagos – by the doyen of press photographers, Vel Kadarasen.

The Context

Alain Ah-Vee began with a clear outline of where we are today: the end of the 50-year illegal lease between the thief of Chagos, Great Britain, and the receiver of the stolen goods, the USA comes at the end of the year; finally, at long last, we have been able to force the Mauritian State to put a Resolution on the table before the United Nations General Assembly where it is today, in order to take Britain before the International Court of Justice. The British have, however, put pressure on the UN General Assembly's President to arrange an unprecedented 6-month "on hold" for the Resolution. As Rajni Lallah would later point out in her speech, this is precisely what the Mauritian bourgeoisie had called for through its mouthpiece, *L'Express*, in an editorial signed KC Ranze a month before! So, the Conference would thus expose that this was a new conspiracy, adding to all those already exposed in the British Courts in the 2000 judgment in the Bancoult case, as the hideous colonization continues into the 21st Century. Alain Ah-Vee said that we would work, during the Conference, towards a Second Resolution of Grande Riviere, if possible, one that moves forward from the First Resolution of Grande

Riviere in 2010, copies of which were distributed along with the Program for the two days.

The participants

The audience of participants was made up of delegations from organizations that work close to LALIT, including the Chagos Refugees Group, LALIT members from branches all over the country, LALIT supporters, and international and local guests.

Former President of the Republic's Opening Speech

The Opening Speech was by Former President of the Republic, Cassam Uteem. He presented a requisitory of accusations, closely argued, against the US and British States, as the perpetrators of so much suffering. One of the high points of his speech was the analysis of how the massive refugee problem facing Europe, and not just other neighbouring countries like Turkey, Jordan, the Lebanon, Pakistan, is the direct result of US bombing, carried out by B-52's, many of which take off from Diego Garcia. So, the suffering in terms of deaths, injuries, displacement and exile, is directly linked to the need to close down the base.

Ram Seegobin on the Changing Stakes

Ram Seegobin, for LALIT, described the changing nature of "the stakes", and how to struggle for the end of this 50-year military occupation of the country always has to stay abreast of these changes. The Chagos Refugee Group's cases before the British Courts have more-or-less reached their limit; and it is not surprising when we know that state institutions, including the judiciary will, in the final analysis, play "raison d'état" as their trump card. He also mentioned that the GRC has finally been integrated into the platform reclaiming sovereignty as well as "the right to return". And that the state of the Republic of Mauritius has finally got a resolution on the agenda right now before the UN General Assembly to take Britain to the International Court of Justice at the Hague, after last year's victory before the Tribunal under the Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). So, it is a time of hope, he said,

and of dangers: the dangers have already manifested themselves.

Music

The composer, musician and singer, Mennwar, with just his guitar as accompaniment, gave a heart-rending performance of a song against the military base: the refrain picked up one of the light motif of the Conference: military bases are what make war and bomb-dropping possible. They exist for killing. And later Rajni Lallah and Joelle Hoseiny performed a second heart-rending song, composed by Rajni, about the dismembering of a country's land and sea, the removal of Chagosian people, and the deathly bombing of a wedding barat in Afghanistan.

Jean-Claude Bibi on Sovereignty

Jean-Claude Bibi, former LALIT de Klas member and also former Attorney General and Ambassador, spoke on the political aspects of "sovereignty". After a dryish, academic beginning, he went on to expose the bandit nature of the two states perpetrating the Diego Garcia and Chagos problem, Britain and the USA, and how we need to be aware of the lengths to which they go.

Ragini Kistnasamy, for LALIT, gave a brilliant account of the struggle as it changed its nature over the years, and how the toughest moments of confrontation, built up over years, then brought the biggest advances.

Documentary Films

Each day began with a documentary. So, as guests finished drinking a cup of welcoming tea, they would move into the Hall for a film. The first day was the Irish TV classic Peadar King documentary, with long soliloquys by Aurelie Talate and Fernand Mandarin, as well as clear analyses by Olivier Bancoult and the late Chief Justice, Rajsoomer Lallah. The second day was John Pilger's powerful, accusatory film against the State apparatus of both the US and Britain over 50 years.

Interpretation

It is something of a lesson to those who organize international conferences in academia in particular, that the entire Conference was held in the mother-tongue. Visitors from abroad were provided with interpretation, done by the team of nine volunteers, on hardware invented by LALIT-member, Jean-Yves Dick. Often they also had an English draft of the speaker's prepared speech, as a guideline. Then when visitors spoke in English, Kreolophone participants were provided with little radios and earphones to listen in in Kreol.

David Vine

David Vine, author of *Island of Shame* and *Base Nation*, was the first international speaker. American by nationality, he has worked for years with the Chagossians. To everyone's warm appreciation, he spoke at the microphone entirely in Kreol. His speech was an indictment of US military bases.

On Victory

For LALIT, Lindsey Collen spoke on the necessity of keeping victory in sight always, and of not ceding on any of the issues of principle: base closure/clean-up, complete decolonization of Mauritius including Chagos, and the right to return under conditions of free circulation within the entire Republic.

Debate

After each session, there were naturally questions, comments and points of debate raised from the floor, making for a rich sharing of ideas.

The Fernand Mandarin book on Chagos was on display and for sale at the Conference, as a tribute to his struggle.

Homage to Vel Kadarasen, Photographer

Doyen photographer, Vel Kadarasen, was paid homage to by the Conference. The Muvman Liberasyon Fam had organized the photographic exhibitions as a contribution to the struggle that it, as a women's association, has long been involved in. Sadna Jumnoodo, in a speech on the veranda at lunch time, in the present of Vel, his wife, his two daughters, and their families, expressed everyone's admiration for the art of capturing a moment in time to represent an epoch, something that Vel was so thoroughly professional about.

Militarism in the US

Clare Bayard, a San Francisco anti-militarist activist and trainer spoke on movements in the US against police violence, even as the police force in the US becomes more and more militarist, itself, more and more like an army for oppressing the US people. She linked the struggle against militarism with the land question, as indigenous people in the US and beyond rise up and unite against the occupation and destruction of their lands. She said how militarism, and even genocide, were the foundation stones of the "state" of the USA.

US Methods of infiltrating other countries

Rada Kistnasamy presented an outstanding paper on how the US operates politically within a country, through methods as diverse as SOFAs (creeping militarization of US presence through Status of armed Forces Agreements with their hosts of their embassies worldwide) and giving "silence" money to NGOs and having soldiers visiting primary schools and then adopting whole villages.

Joseph Gerson, world-renowned writer on US Bases on Skype Call

In a Skype call, Joseph Gerson said how bases were and are part of the war machinery. They are there in order to make war. He also spoke of the forces within the US society that are against this war machinery, and how sometimes victories come unexpectedly against almighty forces. He gave examples.

Pelindaba Treaty: Noel Stott on Skype

On the Pelindaba Treaty, the Conference benefitted from the detailed knowledge of exactly where this new Treaty is up to in terms of its Secretariat, just about to begin to function in South Africa. This gave ideas for an item to add to the Resolution, if there would be one.

Report from Britain and New York by Olivier Bancoult

The first report from the UN delegation in New York was given by Olivier Bancoult at the LALIT conference. He said he was proud to be part of the Mauritian delegation, and was pleased to see the sovereignty and right of return issues linked this way. He spoke of how the British state had offered him and his association a one-third share of 20,000 Pounds Sterling, which he refused. He had, however, accepted secret negotiations with the British. Boris Johnson's main concern was as usual about the military base. He wanted to assure that Olivier Bancoult believed that the base could cohabit with the Chagossian's presence. And Olivier gave him this assurance, he said. LALIT member Kisna Kistnasamy called formally and publicly on Olivier Bancoult to take this question of collusion with the military base back to his members for re-consideration, saying it was a mistake to take this line. It weakens all his struggles and our struggles, which need to be principled. LALIT believes, as the late Aurelie Talate put it, that Diego Garcia is both the cause and the key to resolving the problem: the base must be closed, Kisna Kistnasamy added.

Former US Navy Employee now Anti-Militarist, Maricela Guzman

Coming from a poor family from Mexico, originally working as "san-papye" in California, she joined the US Navy in order to pay for her studies, so that she could be the first person in her family with a university diploma. She chose to be stationed at Diego Garcia, and while she was there, she realized that the US Navy employed people from the Philippines plus a few Mauritians, she said, to work in slave-like conditions on the base. She did not agree with this, and this began a process of personal change in her. She said there are many "veterans" from the US armed forces who are against the

military.

The Mauritian Bourgeoisie: The US-UK Fifth Column

Rajni Lallah's speech outlined the way in which from the very Lancaster House negotiations from 1965 onwards, the Mauritian bourgeoisie was a fifth column for the UK-US imperialists. The capitalists blatantly put their interest in profit before any interest in peace, sovereignty or human dignity.

Wilbert van der Zeijden on US military bases

Wilbert van der Zeijden, who was speaker at LALIT's First Conference on Diego Garcia in 2010, was again speaker. He showed how US bases surround Europe, the Middle East, Japan and China. He put emphasis on the way in which there are a series of new SOFA (Status of armed Forces Agreements) creeping into Africa, thus giving the US more and more military presence. He said we should beware of this creeping present from a very small military presence, like the "temporary drone base" recently inveigled into Niger. He said closing bases is not easy, but bases have been closed. He mentioned some. He said, however, that the good news is that the economy that maintains these very expensive military installations is no longer strong, and it is possible that the US will be forced to reduce its overseas bases.

Allies

Alain Ah-Vee spoke on how in all struggles we must be clear who our allies are. And while States world-wide have been our allies in the UN system and other international groupings of countries, our real allies are "peoples" not states. And in Mauritius and world-wide, it is working people, the working class that is the staunchest ally.

Resolution

A series of points were agreed one by one by show of hands, to be included in a Second Resolution of Grande Riviere that the Conference called to be

drafted accordingly by 6 people within the next 10 days. The Proviso is that there is no retreat further back than the First Resolution. This will be published soon.

Workshops

Three workshops then met to do brain-storming, and collect ideas on three different aspects of the future struggle:

1. How to consolidate the massive support that has so far been built up internationally over the years, including in letters sent for the Conference.
2. What actions can be encouraged within the US and UK. One example was how to work to get the US to ratify the Cluster Bomb Treaty, so that there can be UN inspections on Diego Garcia, for example to see if there is compliance with the Treaty
3. What actions can be encouraged in perhaps all countries: for example, how to oppose the SOFAs that inch forward, world-wide, and how to encourage people to refuse US Embassy hand-outs, and to call them “silence money” or even “blood money”.

Social Gathering

Before going home people gathered around snacks, tea, coffee and drinks – so that everyone could chat to the visitors from abroad, or to friends from further afield in Mauritius.

Welcoming speech for LALIT's Conference on Diego Garcia

In creole

Diskur Labyinveni pu Konferans Internasyonal LALIT lor Diego Garcia le 1 Oktob 2010 Gran Rivyer Nord Wes, par Alain Ah-Vee.

LOR NOM LALIT mo swet labyinveni tu dimunn prezan. Nu salye sak dimunn ki prezan isi zordi dan sa 2yem Konferans Internasyonal Lalit lor Diego Garcia. Nu swet labyinveni tu manb, sinpatizan LPT, MLF, CTSP ek lezot lasosyasyon prezan.

E enn byinveni spesyal pu delegasyon Grup Refizye Chagos, enn grup avek ki nu finn ansam dan lalit pu liber Chagos, ar lekel nu finn travay ansam dan regrupman *Rann nu Diego* e ar ki nu finn tultan mintenir kontak.

Nu ena plezir osi akeyir parmi nu ansyin Prezidan Repiblik, Cassam Uteem, ki finn aksepté fer Diskur Luvertir nu konferans. Li ti osi prezan an 2010 pu fer Diskur Luvertir Premye Konferans LALIT lor Diego.

Nu ena plezir aster swet enn byinveni spesyal nu sink invite internasyonal. Mo pu dir ennde mo an Angle, “I would like in the name of LALIT and all partitipants present to welcome our international guests: Clare Bayard, Maricela Guzman, David Vine all three from the US, Wilbert Van der Zeijden from The Netherlands and Jammu Narayana Rao from India.” Zot tu finn fer enn gran kontribisyon pu zot ariv isi zordi pu partisip dan nu Konferans. Zot finn vinn Konferans lor zot prop fre. Sa Konferans la finn fer san okenn finans extern, gras-a zot kontribisyon, e gras-a buku travay volonter depi tu manb ek sinpatizan.

Nu finn inklir dan sa konferans la enn Expo foto lor lalit Chagos, ki finn prepare par *Muvman Liberasyon Fam*. Sa li enn lot form kontribisyon. Bann foto la finn fer par Vel Kadarasen, ki finn aksepté fer luvertir ofisyel Expo zis apre premye sesyon, setadir dan kumansman brek dezene. Atraver sa Expo la li enn fason pu gard vivan memwar sa long lalit ki finn ena ek pe kontiyne lor problem Chagos.

Ena osi enn Expo mesaz sutyin pu nu konferans ek lezot linisyativ anfaver lalit lor Chagos depi diferan grup ek individi dan lemond.

Nu finn inklir 2 seans fim lor Chagos, premye ki finn ena zordi gramatin kot nu finn gayn lokazyon apresye fim Paedar King “The Chagos Islands are Closed”. Dime gramatin nu pe zwe fim byin koni John Pilger, “Stealing a Nation.”

Kom dabitid pu ena lamizik-sante. Nu pu ena plezir ekut plitar zordi

Menwar ki pu sant enn morso ki li finn deza sante dan Lespayn ek lezot pei. Li lor Diego. Dime nu pu gayn plezir ekut Rajni Lallah ek Joelle Hosseiny. Zot sante li osi, li lor Diego.

Nu premye konferans lor Diego ti fer isi mem an 2010.

Zordi, an 2016, pandan 2 zur nu pu la pu ekut plizir kamarad ki finn analiz diferan laspe problem Chagos e ki pu partaz zot refleksyon ar nu; nu pu kapav osi partisip dan deba. Nu pu ena osi lokazyon partisip dan werkshop dime kot nu pu gete kimanyer fer swivi seki sorti depi konferans.

Kontex

Si nu prezan zordi dan sa konferans la li parski nu pe truv linportans reflesi ansam, truv nesosite partaz konesans, truv linportans pu ena interaksyon, pu devlop lyin, pu kordine ver aksyon ki kapav amenn dekoloniz Chagos e liber Diego, pu ki drwa de retur, drwa pu al Chagos dan dinite vinn enn realite pu tu Chagosyin, pu tu Morisyin.

Anfet sa konferans la ti sipoze ena lye an 2014. Akoz esians pu sa bay ubyin laranzman illegal ant UK ek US pu servi Diego pe termine lafin 2016, e apartir 2014 ti ena 2 an pu sipoze reget laranzman la, sinon li revuvle otomatikman pu enn period 20 an. Me antretan eleksyon zeneral Desam 2014 inn vini alor nu finn bizin ranvway nu konferans.

Alepok nu ti kone ki, kan sa esians 2014-2016 pe raprose, presyon depi Leta Zini ek Grand Bretayn pu ogmante lor Moris, ki pu ena tu kalite manev, infiltrasyon depi tuledede pwisans. Sirtu USA, nu ti kone, pu sey aksantye so linfliyans dan Moris.

Zordi kan nu pe fer nu 2yem konferans nu pa ti kapav atann enn meyer tayming. Kan nu pe zwenn, la, kestyon dekolonizasyon Chagos lor azanda Lasanble Zeneral Nasyon Zini.

Anfet, alafin guvernman Moris finn pran linisyativ pu al ver met enn ka Lakur Internasyonal ICJ. Depi 1985 *LALIT* pe dimann ki Leta Moris met enn ka divan Lakur Nasyon Zini. Nu finn fer kanpayn pu sa, nu finn fer kol lafis antye Moris pu dimann met ka ICJ, plizir fwa nu finn ekrir formelman diferan Premye Minis pu anklans demars pu ki al ICJ. An 2010 sa demand pu al ICJ ti inklir dan Deklarasyon Gran Rivyer.

Nu ti kone osi ki kan met ka kont Britanik zot pu reazir. Nu ti kone zot pu maniganse, fer tu kalite manev kont Moris, kuma zot abitye. Lerla-mem ki nu bizin plis vizilan, ki nu bizin swiv depre seki pe pase. Sirtu fode nu expoz sa

kalite manev depi UK ek US. Zordi an 2016, kan nu pe get seki finn pase onivo prosedir dan Lasanble Zeneral Nasyon Zini kumadir nu pe truv sa mem kalite trikmandaz, mem azisman Britanik abitye fer. Li vre ki kestyon suverennte lor Chagos ankor tuzur lor azanda Lasanble Nasyon Zini; li mem ena enn nimeru, Item 87. Me deba ek vot lor sa item la finn ranvwaye pu ziska lafin Zin 2017. Li paret ki UK finn apros prezidan seans, Peter Thomson, e finn reysi gayn so lakor pu zel deba lor mosyon Moris. Li interesan note ki tusala pe arive kan expirasyon bay lor Diego pe aproz, ki sipoze lafin Desam sa lane la. E Moris ena deza zizman UNCLOS dan so faver, ki finn dir ki UK pa gayn drwa pran okenn desizyon konsernan Chagos san konsilte Moris. Si deba lor suverennte Chagos ti mintenir, li ti pu azir kuma enn presyon adisyonel lor UK, li ti pu met e UK ek US lor defansiv. Dayer Moris ti deza gayn buku sutyin pu so linisyativ al ICJ depi Muvman Non-aliyne, ACP, Grup 77+Lasinn, Linyon Afrikin, parلمانter pei Lafrik dan Commonwealth.

Li bon osi gard antet ki presyon ena lefe. Parfwa nu kapav panse ki lalit lor Chagos li enn afrontman inegal ant “ti puse” Moris ek zean US ek UK. Me zean osi parfwa tranble. Tutswit kuma Premye Minis, Aneerood Jugnauth anonse formelman dan Parlman ki Moris pe al ver met enn ka ICJ lor kestyon suverennte Chagos, UK ek US avoy zot emiser spesyal pu zwenn Premye Minis pu sey fer li sanz lide. Zot finn mem, pu premye fwa, bibliye enn kominike konzwin, kot US pran pozisyon lor kestyon suverennte lor Chagos anfaver UK, sa osi pu premye fwa, e zot tulde fer bann menas kont Moris. Enn reprezantan lanbasad UK dan Moris finn mem apel dirizan GRC, Olivier Bancoult pu sey intimid li akoz li ti’nn desid pu form parti delegasyon ofisyel guvernman Moris pu al Nasyon Zini.

Sa kalite manev depi UK-US li pa nuvo. Pandan 50an, lor problem Chagos leta Britanik ek ladministrasyon Amerikin finn servi mansonz, konplo, finn azir avek inpinite. Pa samem Lamerik ki ti deklare sanse zot bizin Diego pu instal pa plis ki enn sinp sant kominkasyon laba? Pa Britanik mem ki ti deklare ki sanse zame pa ti ena abitan permanan lor Chagos? Plitar pa UK ek US mem ki ti dir kan Diego pu nepli nesaser pu defans Loksidan akoz lager frwad zot pu return Chagos Moris? Tusala ti nek mansonz. Diego zordi enn parmi bann pli gran baz militer US dan lemond. Zordi Lager Frwad finn termine me baz Diego ankor pe servi, sannkula zot dir pu konbat terorism. Anfet Diego pe servi pa pu bezwin *defans* me kuma baz pu *atak* lezot lepep, kuma dan Lirak, Afghanistan.

Leta UK ek US finn tultan azir an kasyet pu tu seki konsern Chagos ek Diego. Depi lane 70 plizir Premye Minis Britanik finn azir deryer ledi zot prop lepep, finn evit Parlman, pu kokin Chagos, pu demanbre teritwar Moris, pu anpes Chagosyin ek Morisyin gayn akse lor tu bann lil arsipel Chagos.

Plitar zot finn servi mem metod pu konturn zizman lakur ki ti anfafer Chagosyin.

Leta UK ek USA finn azir kont Sart Nasyon Zini, kont plizir Rezolison vote par gran mazorite manb Nasyon Zini, kont Konvansyon lor Drwa Lamer, kont Trete Pelindaba pu enn Lafrik San Zarm Nikleer, kont konvansyon lor klesterbom ek minisyon anti-personel. UK ek USA zot pa bann leta ordiner. Nu pe gayn zafer ar bann leta bandi, bann leta orlalwa. Parey kuma Israel. Akoz samem li nesaser batir e elarzi sutyin anfafer lalit pu dekoloniz e demilitariz Chagos. Pa zis sutyin depi pei dan Nasyon Zini, me osi e sirtu sutyin depi lepep diferan pei lemond, an partilikilye lepep dan Langleter ek Lamerik.

Akoz samem nu pe fer sa Konferans Internasyonal la. Nu bizin expoz e denons sa krim ki Leta UK ek USA finn komet kont Chagosyin, kont lepep Moris. E li pa enn krim ordiner, li enn krim kalkile, delibere pu kas teritwar enn pei, pu expilse par fors tu Chagosyin depi later kot zot finn ne ek viv pu instal enn baz militer lor sa later finn kokin la.

Pu fer fas sa kalite leta la, li nesaser azir ansam dan fason konsyan. Li inportan agrandi sutyin pu travay e tu aksyon lor Chagos. Ena buku travay ki finn deza fer. An 2010 alafin nu Premye Konferans nu ti ena lakorite lor plizir demand ki nu finn reysi met ansam dan Deklarasyon Gran Rivyer. Dimunn prezan zordi finn resevwar enn kopi sa deklarasyon la lor fey kuler ver an 2 langaz. Zordi pu nu Dezyem Konferans, li enn lokazyon pu nu gete ansam ki nu finn reysi fer ek ki reste pu fer. Eski nu ena nuvo propozisyon pu azute par rapor a nuvo kontex zordi? Parey an 2010, li ti pu bon ki nu ena enn komite alafin sa 2yem konferans la pu re-aktyaliz sa Deklarasyon la anfonksyon derulman konferans e ki nu adopte alafin. Kuma an 2010 nu pu fer desort ki ena enn reprezantan Chagosyin kapav siyn ubyin enndors Dezyem Deklarasyon Gran Rivyer, si nu reysi sorti avek enn.

Nu swete ki nu konferans enn rankont konstriktif, ki li ed nu avanse dan lalit pu ki Chagos libere depi tu form lokipasyon militer inperyalis e tu opresyon kont Chagosyin ek Morisyin.

Mersi.

Former President of the Republic's speech at Diego Garcia Conference



by MR CASSAM UTEEM

The Opening Speech at the 2016 LALIT International Conference on Diego Garcia was delivered by Mr. Cassam Uteem, former President of the Republic, who has tenaciously and with integrity, stood firm on the question of the right of return, base closure and the re-unification of the whole of Mauritius. The speech was given on 1 October, at Grand River North West. Here are the notes to which he spoke, translated into English:

I WOULD LIKE to start by expressing appreciation to LALIT for organizing an important conference like this on the theme “*Diego Garcia: 50 Years of Occupation & Banishment, 50 Years of Struggle: Let’s Win!*” after the First International Conference that LALIT organized in 2010 right here in Grand River North West on the theme “*Action to Close the Military Base on Diego Garcia, to End to the Military Occupation of Chagos by the UK and USA, and the Right to Return with reparations for Chagossians*”.

And also, a hearty word of welcome to all the delegates to this important conference, in particular to our friends and guests coming from abroad. Their presence is an additional boost, a precious encouragement, to the 50-year struggle of tiny Mauritius against mighty Britain and even mightier America for their illegal occupation of Mauritian territory, for the banishment of the natives of the Chagos islands and for the construction of a now nuclear base

on Chagossian-Mauritian soil.

So, I thank LALIT for inviting me once again to an international conference on the Chagos. It is an honour to be making the opening speech. Thank you to Ram and Lindsey, thank you Alain, Rajni, Kisna, Rada, and thank you to all the LALIT militants.

Bravo, for keeping alive and tending the flame of struggle to get back sovereignty for Mauritius over Chagos and to attempt to repair the injustice, the veritable crime, committed against the Chagossian people when they were exiled to the Seychelles and Mauritius, and also to get the murderous, nuclear, military base on Diego Garcia dismantled.

2016 is the year when the lease of the Island of Diego Garcia, the lease between the UK and the USA, comes up for renewal. Whether it is a lease or rental, call it what you will, it was all done in the utmost secrecy, so we don't even know what it looks like. 50 years on and still no-one is in a position to say what kind of contract there is between a first country, Britain, and a second country, the USA, for a large bit of territory that belongs to a third country, Mauritius.

Sir Aneerood Jugnauth, now Prime Minister, is the only politician amongst all those who participated in the pre-Independence Constitutional negotiations at Lancaster House in London. In a violent outburst in the National Assembly on 17 May this year in reply to a Private Notice Question from the Leader of the Opposition, he said that Chagos is part of Mauritian territory and the British should clearly indicate when exactly they intend to return sovereignty to Mauritius over Chagos. He called for a date to be given – otherwise he said he would go through the UN and get the International Court of Justice at The Hague to statute on what the British and Americans did when they cut out the Chagos Archipelago out of Mauritian Territory at the moment of Independence.

It was with no less violence that the British and Americans reacted, and they did it in unison; they threatened Mauritius with sanctions if the Prime Minister went ahead to the ICJ. “Referral of this matter to the International Court of Justice would cause lasting damage to Mauritius’ bilateral relations with both the UK and the USA.” In other words, if we decode the not-so-diplomatic message of these two big powers: No UK or US investments, no preferential trade agreements between Mauritius and either of these two countries, no more tourists from Britain and no more scholarships from Britain for Mauritian students. Once again, blackmail. Is this attitude compatible with what these two big powers say in public – for example, as regards the Rule of Law and respect for international law? As Milan Meertarshan said in *L'Express* of Wednesday 20 July 2016, quoting from a

New York Times editorial of 12 July, 2016, “*The Obama administration has said that disputes should be resolved according to international law, a position it now reaffirms.*”

How do you reconcile this stand with the kind of pressure that they are bringing to bear against a small State like Mauritius, when all Mauritius is doing is seeking judicial clarification on important points of international law? The ICJ is the main judicial body in the United Nations system, and yet two important Permanent Members of the Security Council, the UK and USA, accord themselves the authority to threaten a small Island State of Mauritius with serious consequences if the majority of the UN General Assembly’s members decide to seek no more than an “advisory opinion” from this same International Court of Justice. So, until today, it seems one can flout the law if one is strong: Might is still right!

The Prime Minister of Mauritius, on this point, has the unanimous support of the population. He was very recently at the UN General Assembly where he had managed to get the Item about Chagos inscribed on to the Agenda for the General Assembly. But the UN General Assembly won’t debate nor vote on the motion until June next year. And inbetween, the UN calls on Mauritius to have discussions with the British. We acted very much too late on this, otherwise we should already have had the chance to debate the Resolution, get a majority of States in our favour, and go to the ICJ.

Anyway, then what has happened? There was a meeting a week ago between Sir Aneerood Jugnauth and Mr. Boris Johnson at the request of the latter. What an anti-climax! A Prime Minister should be meeting another Prime Minister, and not the Foreign Affairs Minister. Unless perhaps Boris Johnson was bringing along a letter of invitation from Theresa May. But no such thing. [Mr. Cassam Uteem here quoted from Boris Johnson’s correspondence, in which he threatened Mauritius if it took the matter to the ICJ at the Hague.]

When, in fact, the Prime Minister had already said that he had written to the British Prime Minister the 14 April and again on 14 May 2015, saying that Mauritius was ready for negotiations.

“J’ai déclaré au Premier ministre anglais que la Grande-Bretagne ne pouvait prendre des mesures concernant les defences uses de l’archipel des Chagos sans le consentement de Maurice. Il [Cameron] m’a répondu, le 9 juin 2015, proposant que des discussions aient lieu sur les questions de conservation marine et que la Grande-Bretagne n’acceptait pas que Maurice soit consultée ou prenne part aux négociations entre ce pays et les Etats-Unis sur les defences uses des Chagos.”

Have they forgotten, or are they pretending to have forgotten, the judgment handed down by the United Nations Arbitration Tribunal in March 2015? Mauritius challenged the creation by Britain of a Marine Protected Area around the Chagos Archipelago. The Tribunal said Mauritius was right, and that there is nothing that Britain can do with the Chagos without the participation of and consent from Mauritius.

In my talk at the 2010 LALIT International Conference, referring to the Chagos saga, I remember saying that there were two guilty parties in this matter: the US Administration and the British Government, plus a victim that was also a consenting accomplice i.e. the political class in Mauritius in the 1960's and that there were two victims, the Chagossian people, in particular, and also the Mauritian people, in general.

Let us look at the victims in this: Mauritius lost a part of its territory, an immense part. It was not a "detail" as Seewoosagur Ramgoolam once said.

And, the Chagossian people lost everything: their houses, land, work, animal stock, pet dogs, their homeland, their paradise islands, a lifestyle bathed in nature, the place where their ancestors were buried in peace, they lost it all. They were uprooted and expelled from their land by the British, who stole it, and they became exiles, some of them doubly exiled: first to Mauritius, and then to Britain. Charlesia Alexis passed away over there in Britain. Mrs Lisette Talate died here! Two immense figures who struggled for the right to return to their place of birth right to the end. Two organizations based in Mauritius, one led by Olivier Bancoult and the other by Fernand Mandarin, each one in his own way continuing the struggle so that Chagossians can exercise their right to return to their islands.

Fernand, in his book, "Retour aux Chagos" brings proof for the first time, that the plan to empty the Islands of all their people dated from as early as 1963, because according to Fernand Mandarin, his wife came to Mauritius to give birth in that year, and the Authorities refused to let her go back to her family in Diego Garcia after she had given birth.

And when we look at Olivier Bancoult, we see that the British Justice system has played yoyo or pingpong with him. From over 3 years ago I advised him to abandon the legal struggle through the British Courts and to concentrate his energy on the political struggle: which is the only way to get justice.

Here are the charges in the *Political Struggle* against those guilty, charges put by the victims, for premeditated acts that we can put as a list of 10 formal Charges:

1. Conspiracy to steal the Chagossians' land, which is also Mauritius' land – both the land and the sea. To do so by setting up a fiction of a colony called BIOT that had never existed before the plot to invent it.
2. Banishment (Expulsion, Exile) of the Chagossians from their home islands to Seychelles and Mauritius. This is a Crime against Humanity, again with premeditation.
3. Terrorism – to kill the Chagossians' dogs in the ovens, acts of cruelty in themselves – and acts designed to give Chagossians an idea of what treatment was being reserved for them, should they refuse to leave their islands i.e. those we are accusing politically were responsible for terrorizing the whole population, this too with premeditation.
4. Dismemberment of Mauritian territory at the time of Independence, which is against UN Resolutions.
5. Blackmail of political leaders of Mauritius in 1965: In exchange for Independence, you give Chagos, they said. Choose, with the blade of a knife at your neck!
6. Wilfully lying: (a) Diego will become a mere Communications Station, and then later (b) a mere base for the defense of the West's interests (the Free World's interests), while in fact it was a military base which today has become a nuclear base. Now, they have another story: (c) they are combatting terrorism.
7. Pedding a lie to the whole world to the effect that the Chagos Archipelago consisted of deserted islands.
8. Denying the existence of a quasi-indigenous population of Chagossians on the Archipelago of Chagos.
9. Denying the right of return, a fundamental right, to Chagossians, the real inhabitants of the Islands.
10. Abandoning the Chagossians on unknown soil, without so much as a roof over their heads, and without the least food for sustenance. This is what in French is called "*non assistance aux personnes en danger de mort*".

And what is the prime mover of all this suffering for the Chagossians? What is the real reason behind the Mauritian loss of sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago – its lands and its sea? The origin of all the suffering is clear: it is the decision by the USA to build a military base in the Indian Ocean, and the fact that their eyes fell upon Diego Garcia as the exact spot they wanted for the base. This is why the Chagossians got kicked out of their Islands. This is why Mauritius lost sovereignty over part of its territory.

And today we are being told by the Government that this base on Diego

Garcia will remain, and that the Americans are guaranteed that Mauritius, once it gets sovereignty over Chagos again, will not kick the USA out, nor call for the dismantling of the nuclear base on Diego Garcia – all Mauritius needs is that they pay us rent! This is what the Prime Minister is saying! I ask you! Mauritius needs that kind of money? Blood money? Money with innocent peoples' blood on it? Just so that we can succeed in a second economic miracle?

I do not agree with this kind of reasoning. This base is one of the most important in the world, and also one of the most murderous. B52 bombers and missiles have set off from there in order to kill innocent people in Afghanistan and Iraq.

No. We must not go down this road. We must realize that the base is the cause of all the suffering, and the base is the cause of ongoing suffering, and potential suffering on and on into the future. We want it dismantled. We want our dismembered country re-united. We want all Chagossians to be free to return there at their will, with the suffering they have been through fully recognized. We will not stop struggling until we win, as the title of the Conference says it!

I am sorry I have spoken rather lengthily. But, LALIT invites me only once every five years or so, so what can I do? [Laughter and applause.]

I wish you good deliberations in this important International Conference. [Applause.]

**What's at stake in the Diego
Garcia/Chagos struggle?**



by **RAM SEEOBIN**

BEFORE I BEGIN my talk on what's at stake in the struggle over Diego Garcia and the whole of Chagos, I'd like to respond to two things Former President Cassam Uteem said.

The first one is he mentioned how it was difficult to know what exactly is in the contract between the British and the USA. over the Diego Garcia "lease". This is hardly surprising. Can you imagine a contract between a thief and a receiver of stolen goods? Britain stole Chagos. There's the thief for you. Britain stole it, and kept it. Then Britain handed it over to the USA for its military base. The USA thus occupies Chagos today as a receiver of stolen goods. There is not a contract between thief and receiver. The French in their laws have a name for this kind of combine: they call it an "association des malfaiteurs". That is what their contract amounts to: an agreement between bandits.

The second thing is this. If you read the press here, especially one of the dailies recently, they raise a strange question. They are debating the bizarre issue of whether Mauritius sold Diego Garcia, sold the whole of Chagos, to the British in 1965 or not. They announce with straight faces: "Diego Garcia is already sold. Mauritius got the money. Mauritius even signed a receipt." "Chagos was sold way back," they say, "so how can you get it back?" What is important in what Cassam Uteem said when he drew attention to a new item of information in the Fernand Mandarin's book, is that it can help to shut the

mouths of those who come up with this nonsensical debate. What kind of a debate is it to discuss whether in 1965, Chagos was sold or not sold, when, in 1963, the British – the colonial power here – was also already the colonial power in Chagos, and the British could already even before 1965 prevent people returning to Chagos from Mauritius – even before negotiations at Lancaster House began. This one fact helps to understand it all. It is not a question of whether Chagos has been sold or not sold. It never has been a question. In 1965 Mauritius was territory of the Queen of England. Chagos, being part of Mauritius, was territory of the same Queen of England. Britain was the territory of the Queen of England, too. So, what exactly was the Queen selling to herself? This debate must be put to rest. People who talk about having “sold Chagos” must be treated with the contempt they deserve. They are acting like a 5th column of the British State, and we must mistrust them accordingly.

Let’s come to the question as to what is at stake. Alain Ah-Vee, who is presiding, said how LALIT is the only political party that has kept Chagos on the agenda permanently over the past four decades – in our publications, on our website, in conferences we have attend all over the world and in our demonstrations. We have understood its importance. We don’t just bring the subject up from time to time. We don’t just put our views on record. If you visit our website or read our publications, you’ll see that from as early as 1975 - 1976, we were already talking about Chagos and acting on the Chagos issue. LALIT militants have participated in hunger strikes – in Cassis, in La Chausee. We have maintained the issue on the agenda, always.

Over the past 40 years, we have found that at different times, the stakes were different. There have been different factors that have impacted upon this struggle. We need to understand what is at stake if we want to make the struggle move forwards. If we don’t understand the real stakes, we risk treading water instead of moving forward.

The stakes depend on local and international political changes. We need to be aware of these. They also depend on the economic environment. We need to understand this too. There are things at stake that depend on international laws, conventions and institutions, like the UN and the ICJ. So, we need to keep all these stakes in mind because at any one time or another, different stakes have different weights. Understanding the shifting stakes helps us know where to put our efforts at a particular moment.

In LALIT, we never look at the struggle for Diego Garcia and Chagos as an academic issue or an intellectual exercise. We see it as a struggle that is down-to-earth, one that we fight every day. And it is a struggle that we intend to win. It is not a struggle that exists just on paper. It is one we must win. We

must win for Chagossians, and for the Republic of Mauritius.

Let's come to present moment. What is at stake now.

We need to understand firstly that the long struggle that the Chagos Refugees Group (GRC) has been involved in in the Judiciary in London is slowly reaching its limits. Is it possible to win a struggle over Chagos through the Courts in London? Or will the case inevitably bump into a hard limit? Here too, I'm going to quote a French expression because it is so accurate. They call it "raison d'état". You can maybe win against the Queen – even in the Queen's Courts – and then you lose on appeal. And if you win on another appeal, then you get an Order-in-Council, a decree, passed against you. The Queen does not bow down to any Statutes in the final analysis. The Queen's power is hers, directly. That is the meaning of *raison d'état*. And now we are at a moment when any hope of victory through this long struggle that the GRC has maintained with such determination before all the different Courts in London, is beginning to shrink. We need to bear this in mind.

We also need to keep in mind, that as this happens, the leaders of the GRC have seen that it is necessary – and for this I take my hat off to them – that they form part of the political platform that is claiming Mauritian sovereignty as well as the right to return. You will all have seen on the television that Olivier Bancoult was sitting in the UN General Assembly as an integral part of the delegation of the Republic of Mauritius. The Platform of the delegation was sovereignty and the right to return. So, at long last, we have seen the setting up of a common platform.

In LALIT, we have a rather different platform. For us, we say, sovereignty, most certainly. But sovereignty in order to close down the base. This is why in all our slogans, on all our posters and banners, there is emphasis on Diego. We learnt this from Lisette Talate. She always said that the key was Diego. She understood this. She taught us the importance of Diego in this struggle. When you put the military base, when you put militarism, on the agenda, you get a much broader support base. On the issue of the right to return, for what the Chagossians have suffered, you get a certain amount of support on a purely humanitarian basis. Similarly, on the issue of sovereignty, you can get support for decolonization from African countries, from India, and China, it's true. But, when your platform includes opposing the military base, you get support from huge anti-war movements, huge anti-war groups, movements for world peace, anti-imperialist movements. You garner all this support. We saw it when we were in a delegation to Mumbai for the No Bases meeting, where the GRC was present alongside us. There, when we exposed the problem of Chagos and Diego Garcia, we got massive support from the international anti-war movement. It is important to keep the question of base

closure on the agenda. We have put pressure to get a UN Resolution, and we have won one. That's all to the good. Both Alain and Cassam Uteem have mentioned how long we have sought a UN Resolution to go to the ICJ. But, there have been all kinds of occult pressures that have led to the Resolution, while staying on the agenda, being put on "hold". It is pending. Mauritius is supposed to go and negotiate. But, to negotiate with who? Those perfidious ones? With those perfidious ones that have been stringing us along for 50 years? Mauritius should go and negotiate with them? For 50 years, they have refused to address the problem. So, how are negotiations going to help? Now? In these next seven months Britain is going to do what it has refused for 50 years to do? We have begun our research to find out if this "hold" operation is normal, that is to say, to have something on the agenda, but suspended for later discussion. It is not usual. And when you see the pressure the UK and USA have already put on Mauritius, the threats they have already meted out, it is easy to understand how they get Item Number 87 on the Agenda put on "hold" until June next year.

But the Resolution is on the agenda. And if there is a vote at the UN General Assembly, then the dispute between Mauritius and Britain will go before the ICJ. And the ICJ will be called upon to give an Advisory Opinion on what happened in 1965. It is not binding. It is not even binding. And yet Britain and the US are trying to avoid it like the plague.

Look at Britain on this.

Britain accepts the jurisdiction of the ICJ. When Mauritius put a case over 10 years ago, they said, "No, we are in the Commonwealth, and countries in the Commonwealth can't bring binding cases against us at the ICJ." So, I remember the Mauritian Government at the time, of which the MMM was part, said, "Well if that's how it is, we will leave the Commonwealth and take the case to the ICJ." What did the British state then do? It went and changed its contract as concerns the ICJ. From that moment onwards, even countries that were in the past in the Commonwealth can no longer put binding cases against Britain.

And now, they come and say go and negotiate with this kind of State? With this? Boris Johnson, I agree with Cassam Uteem on this, why on earth did Jugnauth agree to go and meet this buffoon? He is a buffoon. (I can say this about him because he went to the same University as me.) [Laughter.]

But in this period, between now and June next year, we are in a time of great dangers. We will be living times during which the Mauritian Government will go and sit with Theresa May or with Boris Johnson or other British officials.

This period represents all kinds of dangers. In particular, both the UK and the USA will work on other countries, using the same kinds of pressure they already use on Mauritius. They have time to pressure countries into not voting for the Resolution.

They have other ways of working, too. And we need to be conscious of this kind of danger. Amongst the Chagossians are certain, especially in the UK, in Crawley, who have opinions very different from the opinions we share here. Amongst one of the groups in the UK, they say they prefer Chagos remains BIOT. They prefer living in a British colony. They say it openly. But this represents a Trojan Horse for the British, in the sense that the British will work within the Chagossian community, especially in the UK but also here. They will threaten a referendum. They will say, "Let the Chagossians decide!" They will invoke international principles like "self-determination", by calling for Chagossians to decide. Whatever they decide, Britain means, Mauritians will have nothing to say in the matter. This danger is what we have to face up to in the next 7 or 8 months. This flagrant disavowal of the decolonizing principle. We must be conscious of this. This is the what we mean when we refer to what is at stake. This is just one part of the stakes.

There are other aspects of the national and international political situation.

Internationally, there is the coming change in who is President of the USA. Whether Obama or Clinton or that other buffoon Trump, it makes little difference because in those countries, whether the US or UK, it is, as I mentioned earlier, *raison d'état* that, in the end, wins. It is not what any politician, whether Obama, Clinton or Trump, thinks. It is the military-industrial complex that decides. We cannot count on the kind of change that happen when the small bit of the State that is elected changes.

In the UK, there has also been a change. Britain has voted for Brexit. This then led to Cameron resigning, and being replaced by a new Prime Minister, Theresa May. Here too, it is true that Theresa May or Boris Johnson have not a different stand from previous governments.

In Mauritius, too, there are changes coming. We have a Prime Minister now who is much older than me – very old – and I do not believe that he will remain Prime Minister for his 5 years. Everyone seems to accept that he will step down. We don't know who will replace him but maybe the Civil Status Office will get a word in edgeways on this [laughter]. Will there be a change in the Mauritian stand? Will the new Prime Minister have the same fixed determination as Aneerood Jugnauth? He is a stubborn one. That is his good point, and also his bad point. He is stubborn. Will his successor have the same steam in his engines as Jugnauth has on the issue? This depends on us.

On the Chagossians. On everyone involved in this struggle. It depends on us to make the Government stand firm, even when pressures come from the UK and USA, open pressures and hidden ones. We determine what our Government does or does not do.

The British High Commissioner said in a press interview that friends don't take friends to Court, meaning of course that Mauritius should not take the British to the ICJ. Maybe. But friends don't steal from friends either [laughter]. If they steal, it is surely fair game to go to Court.

So, these are some of the stakes, some of the dangers, some of the forces we are up against. Knowing all this helps us make the struggle move forward. The Title of our conference is about winning. For 50 years we have struggled, and it is not now that we are going to say let's wait another 50 years. We must win this battle. Knowing the stakes helps us lead the struggle where we need it to go for victory. Thank you.

CHAGOS: The Sovereignty Issue



by **JEAN-CLAUDE BIBI**

Here are the notes that Jean-Claude Bibi spoke to, translated into English, at the LALIT Second International Conference on Diego Garcia on 1 October, 2016.

T HIS PAPER is concerned with the issue of the sovereignty of the Republic of Mauritius in respect of the Chagos Archipelago of which Diego Garcia forms part. It is also the largest island and one that was most populated by the “Zilwa” people, as the Islanders were then referred to, prior to their eviction by the British.

A brief survey of some facts and events will provide us with useful information when discussing Mauritius’s sovereignty.

1. The Chagos Archipelago was part and parcel of the French Colony known then as Ile de France when the British took possession and control of the island in 1810 and renamed it as Mauritius. Four years later, on 30 May 1814, by the Treaty of Paris France formally ceded Ile de France and all its *dependencies* (including the Chagos Archipelago), to the United Kingdom. Up till 1965 Chagos Archipelago was administered from Mauritius.

2. On 8 November 1965, by Order in Council the excision of Chagos Archipelago was carried out and the BIOT was established. Subsequently, a BIOT Commissioner and a BIOT administrator were appointed by the Queen for its governance.

3. The detachment of Chagos Archipelago occurred in the context of pre-independence discussions between leaders of Mauritian political parties and

the Labour government of Harold Wilson. At the same time, the US had requested its British allies to look for some isolated real estate in the Indian Ocean to implant a major military base that was initially disguised as a communications facility. The UK would be rewarded by a discount on the purchase of missiles from the US.

4. The US was insisting on an unpopulated island. Diego Garcia was populated and the UK was perfectly aware of this. Its colonial administration of Mauritius involved also administering the Chagos Archipelago and Diego Garcia in particular. There were some 2,000 Islanders there working in coconut plantations and fishing. Coconut oil from Diego Garcia was exported to Mauritius. Magistrates and Special Commissioners from Mauritius visited Diego Garcia. There was never any interruption of British rule over Mauritius and the Chagos Archipelago as well as over the other Outer islands that now form part of the Republic of Mauritius and they all, except Diego Garcia since its excision, still now share close economic, social, cultural and political links.

5. The unchallengeable truth is that generations of islanders were since more than a century living, working and dying in Diego Garcia. Yet this truth was initially denied by the UK. The reality that real human beings lived there and considered it as their home was brutally dismissed with a huge dose of overtly racist contempt. One D. A. Greenhill, a British diplomat, reported in 1966, that, "*Unfortunately, along with the birds go some few Tarzans or Men Fridays.*" Such an attitude was an early signal that the British would proceed to forcibly expel the Islanders. And they eventually did. By hook and by crook. A combination of tricks and threats were used to exile them to Mauritius.

6. The so-called "legal" basis for the US military occupation of Diego Garcia seems to rest on 3 documents. First, The 1966, Anglo - American Exchange of Notes that decreed that the entire Chagos Archipelago would be available to meet the defence needs of both UK and USA. Then in 1970, after some 2, 000 Islanders had all been expelled, a second US-UK treaty was signed to provide for '*limited naval communications facility.*' In 1976, a third treaty was signed to allow the construction and development of an '*anchorage, airfield, support and supply elements and ancillary services.*' In other words, the US could have its fully fledged military base where today some 3,000 US military and civilian personnel are deployed.

7. On 1 April 2010 the British government made another unlawful manoeuvre to consolidate its position as a landlord who wishes its tenant to be undisturbed in its enjoyment of the Chagos Archipelago. It created a marine protected area(MPA) twice the size of Great Britain around the Chagos Islands known as the Chagos Marine Protected Area.

8. On 18 March 2015, the Permanent Court of Arbitration unanimously

held that the Marine Protected Area (MPA) which the United Kingdom declared around the Chagos Archipelago in April 2010 was created in violation of international law. Earlier in December 2010, a leaked US Embassy London diplomatic cable had exposed the MPA as a fraudulent ploy meant to deprive the Islanders of any chance or hope to return to their homeland.

Part 2

1. The historical facts enunciated above do not simply provide us with some background information pertinent to the ongoing dispute over Chagos Archipelago and Diego Garcia. They are central to the claim of Mauritius that its sovereignty cannot be challenged and should be recognized by one and all in the international community of States. In fact the vast majority of States do recognize the sovereign rights of Mauritius. The real problem is that the military occupation by the US effectively prevents Mauritius to have any control over what is going on there. Without control sovereignty remains totally abstract and practically unreal.

The US and the UK have no sovereign rights, but they have control. It is therefore not so much a question that Mauritius should vindicate its sovereignty but rather and much more a question how and when Mauritius will be able to exercise its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago.

2. These facts and events also reveal the oppressive and unlawful conduct of the British state, its conspiracy with the US, its blatant violation of the territorial integrity of Mauritius just before its accession to independence and its cynical disregard for the human rights of the islanders who were completely dispossessed. These facts, indeed these crimes make it impossible for the UK to contend seriously that it has any legitimate grounds to declare itself the sovereign ruler or administrator of Chagos Archipelago and Diego Garcia.

3. The British are in fact quite discreet about their claim. Their line has always been the least said the better. And when they do open their mouth, they keep reiterating that the islands would be returned to Mauritius once it is ascertained that Diego Garcia is no longer required for defence purposes “of the West”. This can be translated to mean that the interests of western imperialism have precedence over the fundamental principle in international law that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of nation states have to be respected. Allied to a superpower like the USA, the UK behaves as if it is fine to violate international law and to trample over the rights of the Islanders

with impunity whilst at the same time posturing as a state that upholds and adheres to the principles of international law. It went to war over the Falkland Islands under the banner of sovereignty.

4. What does it mean for a state to be sovereign, to exercise sovereignty? I do not propose to put forward here a mere academic or legal definition of the notion of sovereignty and its several dimensions but I will emphasise its political content and ground it in the context of a real struggle against the remnants of British colonialism and the declining but still nefarious might of US imperialism.

5. Sovereignty is the most fundamental attribute of an independent state. It is the supreme, the absolute power by which an independent state governs itself. It is not controlled and is not controllable by any other power external to itself. It is the source from which all other specific powers are derived such as the power to do everything necessary to govern itself, the power to make and execute laws including laws to preserve its independence and its territorial integrity, to impose and collect taxes, to make peace or war, to form treaties with others, to engage or disengage in trade or other relations with other states and to regulate its own affairs without any foreign interference or intervention.

6. Sovereignty is therefore freedom. It is both its guarantee and its concrete manifestation. It ensures that freedom does not remain an abstract ideal or a complex concept that attracts only academic attention. Sovereignty ensures that freedom has a concrete political content. In a democratic state, sovereignty derives its power and legitimacy from the free expression of the political will and choices of its citizens. In turn, a sovereign democratic state guarantees the political and human rights of all its citizens including the right to live in the existing boundaries of their territory.

7. The *Constitution of Mauritius* states that the *Outer islands of Mauritius* includes the islands of *Mauritius, Rodrigues, Agaléga*, Saint Brandon and the *Chagos Archipelago*, including *Diego Garcia* and any other island comprised in the State of Mauritius. The Government of the Republic of Mauritius has stated that it does not recognise the *British Indian Ocean Territory* which the United Kingdom created by excising the Chagos Archipelago from the territory of Mauritius prior to its independence. The Republic of Mauritius claims that the Chagos Archipelago including Diego Garcia forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius under both Mauritian law and international law.

8. The inhabitants of Chagos Archipelago just like the inhabitants of any region in Mauritius or Rodrigues have the inalienable right to live in the country they belong to. International law forbids any dismemberment or

excision of any inhabited territory at and/or prior to independence. These provisions of the Mauritian Constitution are in line with international law. The Charter of the United Nations - The 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights' (United Nations General Assembly, resolution 217 A (III), Dec. 10, 1948) provides in its Article 2 as follows:

No distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Therefore, the rights of the population of Islanders in Chagos Archipelago were fully covered and protected under this international agreement, regardless of sovereign status. Article 9 of the same document claims that '*No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or **exile**,*' (my emphasis).' It was clearly the case that the British State did exactly what is not allowed. They forced the Islanders into exile and split the Chagos Archipelago from the territory of Mauritius in utter disregard for the latter's sovereignty and, simultaneously, in utter disregard for the rights of the Islanders. There is an immense amount of violence involved when a whole group of people are exiled from their territory and from their homes.

9. Yet, there is more and worse. When it comes to assess the conduct of the UK, we have to be clear that we are not dealing with a state, an erstwhile colonial power that, having fallen on hard times, desperately committed an act of grand larceny by grabbing a few acres of land and millions of square miles of ocean. Under US law grand larceny is a felony. There is no doubt that the UK acted feloniously but there is also no doubt that the US too acted criminally by taking possession and effective control of what it knows to be stolen property, a territory that was acquired by means of a crime.

10. Indeed it was the US that gave the UK the not so bright idea of stealing Chagos Archipelago and Diego Garcia. We need to be clear and we need to be blunt: we are dealing with criminal States when we deal with the UK and the US. Both are partners in international crime and not for the first time. They behaved like Mafiosi and they still do. Identifying them as criminals is not a pretext to insult them. It flows from the necessity to provide a forensic description of their conduct as colonial and imperialist states.

11. The gravity of their crime is to be found in Section 1 of Article 7 of the Rome Statute International Criminal Court. We have there a description and the legal definition of the offence of "*crimes against humanity*". Section 1 of Article 7 consolidates the internationally accepted norms that have been in existence since the foundation of the UN in 1948. These norms have been legally valid before, during, and after the British expelled the Islanders.

“Crimes against humanity” means and includes **“Deportation or forcible transfer of population”**.

12. This is exactly what UK and the US did. They perpetrated a heinous crime against the humanity, against the lives of the people of Chagos Archipelago and Diego Garcia. Recently, the Mauritian Prime denounced the UK government as hypocrites who, like the UK, never tire to convince themselves but nobody else that they are champions of democracy, freedom, liberty and that they are willing to die in defence of their “Western values”. The truth is more sinister: they have always been willing to kill in their greedy quest for wealth and military supremacy to protect their loot. It is true that they are hypocrites with no credibility and unworthy of any respect.

13. What is equally true is that they behave like lawless and arrogant gangsters that rely on violence and the threat of violence. Their military resources permit them to commit crimes against humanity time after time. The crime against the people of Chagos Archipelago and Diego Garcia is no novelty. Slavery, oppression of military weak native populations, exploitation, forced exile, deportation and massacres are intrinsic to the political conduct of colonial powers and of US imperialism. Their crimes are not singular. They are capable and guilty of mass destruction. We have the responsibility and the task to expose them to the peoples of the world for what they are: serial criminals with no respect for international law and for the sovereignty of free people across the world. The UK and the USA represent a dangerous threat to the dignity and security of humanity.

About the Diego Garcia & Chagos struggles



by **KISNA KISTNASAMY**

This is what Kisna Kistnasamy spoke about at the LALIT Second Conference on Diego Garcia on 1 October, 2016. These were the English notes used by interpreters translated from her Kreol notes.

THE STRUGGLE

I will speak about “the struggle”. So while the theme of the entire Second LALIT Conference on Diego Garcia is “*Diego Garcia: 50 years of Occupation and Exile, 50 years of Struggle: Let’s bring Victory!*” I will speak in particular about the second part of it.

Introduction

All the problems began when the USA were looking for an uninhabited island in the Indian Ocean to construct a military base in the Indian Ocean. At that time, the British administration was delegating its role of policing the world to the USA. So together, they plotted to organise this grand theft. In 1965, the English colonial government dismembered Chagos from the

Mauritian territory and (December 1966) the UK gave the USA a lease on Diego Garcia's land and its sea. That meant that Great Britain became a burglar state and the USA, a receiver of stolen goods.

The American military base on Diego Garcia has been the cause of the problem. It's because of the military base that Britain together with its ally, the USA committed the first crime: the dismantling of Mauritian territory in the process of Mauritius becoming independent. The second crime was to uproot the Chagossians from Chagos. Both crimes were committed so that the USA could install a military base on Diego Garcia. This is something we should always bear in mind.

If we are here today, it is because of 50 years of struggle

If we're meeting in this 2nd International Conference on Diego Garcia today, it is thanks to the struggle of the last 50 years. There has never been any capitulation to those two bandit states that Jean Claude has talked about. In fact, there has been resistance from the day the British Government, with the complicity of the US government, decided to dismantle Mauritian territory and uproot the Chagosians. There have been all sorts of struggles, all kinds of human endeavours. And often, that struggle has been against our own Government, against the Mauritian State - for its complicity from day one of its independence on the 12th March 1968, when it became free. And it is this struggle that enables Sir Aneerood Jugnauth to put forward a resolution to the UN to put a case before International Court of Justice. It is this struggle that allows Diego Garcia to remain on the agenda of our own conference. It is this struggle that today has brought about so much International support for our actions to shut down the base, to decolonise Mauritius, to obtain a true right of return for Chagosians.

And we are here today, to continue to contribute to change the course of history – to continue the struggle that began the day Mauritius was broken in two, in 1965.

Different periods of the Diego-Chagos struggle take on different forms

On the international front, the first thing we note is from the start in 1965, 89 member countries of the UN general assembly voted on Resolution 2066 to condemn Great Britain. 18 countries abstained. The dismantling of Chagos including Diego Garcia by Britain prior to Mauritian independence and the forced exile of the Chagosian people violates the United Nations Charter. Three times this was declared illegal: once in 1965, a month after the

dismantling of the territory of Mauritius. Then in 1966 and once again in 1967, when Mauritius was still a British colony, the UN general assembly voted again to condemn Great Britain. Every time, there were countries that abstained but there have never been countries that have voted in favour of Britain. Even Great Britain's accomplice the USA abstained!

Spontaneous resistance against deportation

Concurrently, in the Chagos Archipelago, between 1965-1973, there was a period when there was spontaneous resistance against deportation; very often, passive resistance, where people refused to leave Chagos. So, Chagosians were moved from Diego Garcia to other islands in Chagos. 'Go-slow' was used as a means of protest as well as other forms of resistance. These took place at the time when you heard, "zil inn ferme," "the islands have been shut down" and one cannot return. A strong point was the hunger strike on the Nordvaer ship at the port in Port Louis, sit-ins where people refused to disembark from the ship.

In the context of pre-independent Mauritius, there were a combination of events. One was the struggle for independence when the PMSD succeeded in rallying 4 out of 10 people against Independence, using every kind of terror campaign and another reality was the deep suffering of racial riots (that came and changed the geography of Port Louis). Simultaneously, the Chagosians were being deported from the Chagos to Port Louis.

The socio-political phase with Lorganizasyon Fraternel

In the 1970s, it was a phase that one could call "socio-political" where Chagossians regrouped, mobilised, actively campaigned in the Ilwa Committee of the OF, struggling to make their voices heard. It was a hard fight to make the Chagossians' plight known in Mauritius. But it was to be a key phase to develop the next stage. At the same time the MMM, in its early days, protested against the base. In fact the first political debate on the MBC after the State of Emergency ended was between the MMM and Labour Party and it was on the issue of Chagos and Diego Garcia, in the mid-1970s.

Mass demonstrations with LALIT (at the time of Lalit de Klas) and

Muvman Liberasyon Fam

In the year 1977-1981, there were several hunger strikes by women Chagossians. One of them was in the offices of a local (Mouvement Militant Mauricien) MMM branch in Bain des Dames. A hunger strike at Company Gardens in Port Louis followed and subsequent to that and during it, several spontaneous women's demonstrations took place in Port Louis to support the hunger strikers, demonstrations led by LALIT and Chagossian women. These culminated into a demonstration in front of Government House where Chagossian women showed us how to confront the police. This led to several sit ins in La Chaussee Road in front of the British Embassy. The riot police suffered a defeat. The women in MLF (Muvman Liberasyon Fam) and LALIT members were very active in this phase. 8 women were arrested including two women, members of LALIT and MLF. 3 of those arrested are present here today. 3 of the demands were linked to the closure of Diego Garcia military base, the reunification of Mauritius and the right to return and full reparation for all Chagossians. All at once everyone in Mauritius understood the crimes that Britain and the USA had committed. That's when the support starts to build and enters into the media.

In the Great general strike of 1979 and again in the 1980 mass movement that followed, Chagossians who were employed in sectors like the port, municipalities, residential cleaning, the sack factory and so on were in sectors right at the forefront of the struggle. They learnt from this type of mobilisation.

1981 -- There was one week of demonstrations, with women at the forefront. They were dramatic. There were arrests. The issue became an international issue in women's movements around the world namely in India, USA and Latin America, Africa and in Europe. Lalit de Klas (LALIT) began an international political campaign on those 3 demands. It gained support from political organisations worldwide.

This movement led directly to the compensation from the UK Government, to the setting up of the Trust Fund, and to the Select Committee on the Chagos.

It also led to the birth of Chagos Refugees Group that took power in the elections for the Trust Fund

The Identity phase

The depoliticisation after an intense period of movements and struggles was characterised by an absence of coherence in the political leadership of the MMM, and by more social movements like the Mauritian Committee in the Indian Ocean (KMLI), the National Front for the Ilois support (FNSI), IBION.

This also meant interesting work in the social and cultural field – research and documentation about how people were living in the Chagos, and by the GRC in the Trust Fund. The birth of the Chagossian Social Committee who then became stronger and took power in the Trust Fund.

1992 – When Mauritius became a Republic, Chagos was recognized in the Constitution as part of the Republic.

The birth of the *Rann Nu Diego* Committee (1998)

The CRG together with LALIT set up Rann Nu Diego, and this sparked a new phase of politicization of the struggle. Chagossians and LALIT people put Chagos and Diego Garcia on the political agenda once again. There was nation-level, regional and international mobilization. The CRG again began to become strong.

Legalistic phase

From 1999 onwards, the CRG brought Britain and the US to court cases in Britain, the US and European union. There were many cases. At first, there was a victory in 2000, and then a series of legal defeats. It is not possible to win against “raison d’etat” through the Courts – for the simple reason that the struggle is a political one, and it is a political struggle that will, in the final analysis, win.

Emergence of a Common Front to Close the Base on Diego, reunify Mauritius and assure the right to return with full reparations

In 1998, LALIT contacted Greenpeace and a ship was organized to go to Diego. It very nearly happened.

At the world Social Forum in 2004 in Mumbai, CRG and LALIT sent a joint delegation to the No Bases movement. LALIT members addressed the

world anti-war movement and put Diego on the agenda. In fact LALIT participated in conceptualizing and galvanizing support to make base closure, including of Diego, a political demand.

LALIT's Peace Flotilla movement so successful that British panicked and they, themselves organized instead a visit to the graves of past generations of Chagossians.

There was the John Pilger film, the Paedar King, David Constantin and Michel Gaeron ones. There were books on Chagos, novels about the Chagos.

ICJ – From as early as 1985, LALIT began to militate for the Mauritian State to put a case before the ICJ – not for a legal victory so much as for the political meaning of such an act. By 2010, LALIT and the Declaration of GRNW formally called for the British State to be accused before the ICJ.

Formal International support: Over the years, the OUA/UA, Muvman Non Aligned Movement, ACP, and in regional and international forum, support was built up.

Marine Protected Area

While LALIT built its First International Conference in 2010, (its Declaration has been circulated) there was so much support that again Britain panicked and tried to plot a Marine Protected Area around Chagos.

This, in turn, so infuriated the Mauritian Government that it finally acted and put a case under the Tribunal for the Convention of the Law of the Sea, UNCLOS. Britain's action was found to be illegal

Since 2010, The Diego Committee

Following the First LALIT Conference, and allowing this one to succeed, there were organizations that came together in The Diego Committee. They were: LALIT, MLF, MPRB, ELAN, Grup Abitan Baie du Tombeau

By what political means did we keep Diego on the Agenda

We kept Diego on the agenda by all sorts of means: poster campaigns, national and international open letters, demonstrations in front of the British

High Commission, and US Embassy, preparing a ship and then a peace flotilla, petitions, participating in international forums in Australia, South Africa, France, the US, Europe, Japan, Okinawa, India, everywhere possible, putting the crimes of the UK-US in public.

We have been militating to use the Pelindaba Treaty against Nuclear Arms in Africa and calling for UN inspectors.

We have exposed the secret prisons, torture and rendering that the US was doing. The Red Cross was poised to intervene if the Mauritian State called on it. The Mauritian State didn't.

The US empire, with Britain collusion, was so mired in military action in Iraq and Afghanistan that they have discredited themselves, weakened themselves, and over-reached. These wars are now considered both immoral and illegal. The Chilcot Report, itself, exposes the lack of reason for war in Iraq.

Now 50 years later, there is a Resolution at the UN General Assembly in 2016 – 50 years on. And it was precisely because the issue was always kept on the agenda that this could happen at all. The debate-and-vote has been postponed to June 2017. And what is sickening about this is that the lease between the UK and USA expires in December this year.

But Mauritius has garnered support from the entire world – AU (African union), Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of 77 countries, ACP (African Caribbean Pacific), India – and also all the organizations whose messages are exposed in the Kiosk and in the meeting place below.

So, we note that the demonstration in 1981 provoked a change, moving the course of history ahead. But each bit in the history of the Diego-Chagos struggle has contributed a part in that ongoing history. The struggle is a mighty force that can change history like this. Each one of us here today is continuing to contribute to the 50 years of history and is also a witness to the way that the struggle creates history. Today in this conference, we have an even greater responsibility; in homage to all Chagossian who have left, to those who have died of sadness in exile, to all civilians who have died in Afghanistan, to all the civilians who have died in Iraq, to all the refugees who have left from the destruction of war and to those who have perished at sea. We have to remember that it is B52 bombers taking off from Diego Garcia that have provoked all of this. And it is the USA and Britain who are directly responsible.

The military base in Diego Garcia remains a permanent threat against world peace. None of the peoples of Mauritius, the USA or Britain have democratic control over Diego Garcia, a place from which there can be more

illegal wars detonated, more destruction seen and more crimes committed. With the people of the USA and Britain (and other countries worldwide), we have to continue building and solidifying this movement so that this base on Diego Garcia gets shut down; so that Mauritius can be reunified and; so that Chagosians and Mauritians have the assured right of return and the restoration of freedom of movement amongst all the islands in the Republic of Mauritius.

The Pre-Independence UN Resolutions Declaring Britain's planned dismemberment of Mauritius illegal.

- + Resolution 1654 (XIV) 27 November 1961
- + Resolution 1810 (XVII) 17 December 1962
- + Resolution 2066 (XX) 16 December 1965
- + Resolution 2232 (XXI) 20 December 1966
- + Resolution 2357 (XXII) 19 December 1967

What is “Victory” in the Diego Garcia and Chagos struggle?



by **LINDSEY COLLEN**

We have pleasure in printing the notes translated into English to which Lindsey Colleen spoke in Kreol at the LALIT Second International Conference on Diego Garcia.

MY SPEECH is about victory. Victory on the Diego Garcia issue. Victories, in general.

There was a great peace activist called Bertrand Russell, who was also a great mathematician. He was the first President of the *Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament*, an organization that has sent us a letter of support for this Conference (you can read it on the board outside). Bertrand Russell tells in his auto-biography how when he was in the suffragettes' movement in the early 20th Century, they were a group of a hundred or so women and 3 or 4 men, he being one of them, who everyone thought stone mad to have the idea that women could vote. That was until 1914. War broke out, and women replaced menfolk in all walks of life, and by 1918, within four years, women got the right to vote. But what he said was curious was that after 1918, he never met a single person who admitted to having ever been against women voting. Yet, women's emancipation is still on the agenda. Victory is always partial. I lived a similar experience in Apartheid South Africa. There were so few of us in the movement that raised its head immediately after the mass arrests around Nelson Mandela's incarceration that everyone told us we were

wasting our time. But after 1994, everyone – even here in Mauritius all those who said we were wasting our time in the anti-apartheid movement here – cried “Victory!” rushed to shake hands with Nelson Mandela, and to name every building after him. Yet, the working people of South Africa are still oppressed today. In victory, there are often elements of defeat. It’s the same with the Palestinians’ struggle today. People say, “Israel’s too powerful. The US is too strong!” Well, we will see if the Israeli state will be brought to order.

And today with Diego Garcia, it’s been much the same. But things are beginning to show signs of movement, to show signs of one of these swings that will even wipe out previous positions retrospectively!

What is “victory” in the Diego Garcia struggle?

It’s simple: close down the base and do an ecological clean-up; de-colonize the Mauritian state completely; ensure the right to return heads-held-high for Chagossians; and freedom of movement for all Mauritians over all the land and sea. That’s victory. And maybe this victory will be more thorough if it is at the same time as other immense geo-political and economic changes: the beginning of the end of *all* forward military bases; the beginning of the conversion of all arms manufacture into other production; bringing democratic control over the economy and finance – on the entire globe. This is what we, as wage slaves, aim for, isn’t it? Not much, as the James Connolly song goes, “*We only want the earth*”.

Why is victory possible? Human society is always moving, never stands still. This, for LALIT, is vital to keep in mind. And there are times when 50 years’ political work, while nothing *seemed* to be happening, when all our efforts could glibly be accused of being a waste of time, quite suddenly everything begins moving very swiftly. And today we are on the cusp of such times. And they are times for great vigilance – they are times when we could end up in the worst barbarity, but also when we are closest to bringing in a new socialist way of life, a life beyond war.

Let’s look at Mauritian history in three broad strokes, to see what victories *have been*. It’s 300 years of history. For the first 100 years, most people worked under the legal framework, the labour laws, of slavery. It appeared stable. People who opposed slavery were marginalized. Considered mad. Rebellions, run-aways, protests – were all, *seemed* all, a waste of time. *Seemed*. But no. In the early 1800s everything suddenly became unstable, and events happened fast. Slavery was banned. Prohibited. No-one had, it seemed, ever defended it. Then Mauritius had the next 100 years when we all worked under

different labour laws: the book of laws was in two halves, with well-nigh identical contents: Indentured labourers and ex-slaves. This labour law was also later banned. And we became, for the next hundred years until now “wage slaves” – living by the curious means of selling off hours of our physical and mental powers to someone who buys them from us. And it too seems as stable and as eternal as slavery and indenture did. When LALIT puts it into question, people think it as far-fetched as people putting slavery into question in times gone by.

And this shows the importance of us all, every one of us, being present today to put into question the status quo on Diego Garcia. We can see how things *can be*. Before they happen. This is our true humanity.

For 50 years, too, colonization has been virtually outlawed as immoral. The UN Charter says it is a collective responsibility to rid the world of this scourge. But today, remnants remain. In the victory of Independence, Mauritius including Chagos, suffered a defeat. Britain still colonizes part of Mauritius. And finally, after 50 years of struggle, we have forced the Mauritian State, a cowardly State, a State wont to submit to the private sector by sheer choice, to in fact go and haul Britain before the UN General Assembly last Friday with a Resolution on the Agenda to drag Britain before the UN International Court of Justice (ICJ) at the Hague.

For 50 years, Chagossians who lived on these outer Islands of Mauritius for 4-5-6 generations have been exiled. And finally, it is possible that today they can begin to imagine the right to return, heads held high as Mauritians, free at long last from the colonization of Britain, a colonization so cruel it included banishment.

And for 50 years the military base, the military occupation, has lasted. Because Britain organized its crimes with the US (to dismember Mauritius, to uproot all the Chagossians) *so as to*, with the US, set up a base there – a base used to attack countries like Afghanistan and Iraq, a base on which to torture prisoners kidnapped from independent countries. And now, it is at long last being considered reprehensible by everyone.

Even wars of aggression – a much older phenomenon, but one that anthropologists put at only 5,000 to 10,000 years in a human history of between 150,000 and over 1,000,000 years depending on definitions of “human” – are reaching their expiry date. The big demonstrations against the Iraq war, and now the Chilcot Report show the early signs of the rejection of all wars of aggression.

Our Diego Garcia Conference in all this

When conceptualizing the Conference early last year, we knew we were planning it at a key moment – October 2016 being so near the expiry date of the lease by Britain (the thief) to the US (the receiver of stolen goods) of Diego Garcia.

But we had no idea then, that the UNCLOS Tribunal would vindicate Mauritius against Britain. We had no idea that after 50 years of political struggle, Diego Garcia would at long last be on the national agenda, and even in a privileged position on the international agenda. We did not know that there would at long last be a Resolution before the UN General Assembly, nor that Britain would be being taken to task before the ICJ – as we have, since 1985, been demanding. We did not know that the Mauritian Government would, as we called for them to do, invite the *Chagos Refugees Group* to be part of the official delegation to the UN, nor that Olivier Bancoult would accept. We had no idea that Mauritius would see the sovereignty issue and the right-to-return as “inseparable” issues, as we have always said they are. Nor did we think the Prime Minister would find his own argumentation forcing him to talk as though his old position of “not questioning the military base” is unsound; he now – by the force of events – has changed his position to a confused one. But what is important is that, even at the UN, he is quoting the UNCLOS judgment to say that Britain “*has so far not honoured its undertaking [to return sovereignty over Chagos to Mauritius] as the criteria on which it relies to contend that the Chagos Archipelago is still required for defence purposes keep changing*”. He says the Cold War is over, so the base is no longer necessary. He even says the War on Terror and the War against Piracy are “pretexts”. So, the logic of events forces him to include base closure in his discourse even though he says he is in favour of the maintaining of the base! So, we had no idea when we planned the Conference that things would have changed that much.

We had no idea either that political forces world-wide would support our Conference, as you can read in the Kiosk outside. The people of Britain and the US remind us that their “state” is not themselves, but something they, in many ways, oppose.

With all these changes in 18 months, we begin to see how victory can, when it comes, come quickly.

Even the private sector mouthpiece, *L'Express* that just four weeks ago called for Britain to make a “dignified and sincere offer” in exchange for the

Mauritian State suspending its Resolution (which to some extent has happened through that UN President, Peter Thomson, creating a delay for Britain in debate-and-vote) has last Thursday published an interview and article with a fine academic Maeve Hosier explaining how the Mauritian State must include base closure in its argumentation in order to win – just as LALIT and former President of the Republic and others have been saying all along.

And this way, when victory comes – *as it will if we continue mobilizing in a political way* – then it will seem to have been inevitable. Just as the abolition of slavery, the end of indenture, the vote for women in Bertrand Russell's lifetime, the end of Apartheid in mine – all seemed inevitable once they happened. Nobody will admit they were in favour of the Diego Garcia base. Nobody will admit they were in favour of Bush and Blair's war in Iraq, or NATOs in Afghanistan.

What is this “mobilizing in a political way” that we have to continue? It's easy. But what is difficult is keeping the long term vision in mind (looking both forward and back at history) and also taking care of the day-to-day nitty-gritty of the struggle: a petition, a demand, a march, a conference.

* We need to keep on struggling to understand the issues. Understand them in common with others:

- That it is the military base that is both the source of all the crimes and suffering around the Chagos issue, and it is closing the base that is the key to victory. For this we have to understand all sorts of things, even Treaties like Pelindaba, Conventions like the one against cluster bombs.
- De-colonization must be completed. For this we need to be in touch with the philosophy of the UN, and the nitty-gritty of the mechanisms of the ICJ. We need to situate de-colonization as part of “the land question”, LALIT's present campaign. Mauritian land must be used for creating jobs, for housing, and for food security, not for villas for the world's millionaires.
- That the right of return is *not* the same thing as being “resettled” by a colonial power (which is akin to being settled on a “reserve”).

* That the Diego issue must, for victory, be linked to other struggles: Closing down all Forward Bases: *international struggles*.

* That the concept of anti-war movements must be expanded to include the on-going struggle to close bases and shut down the arms industry.

* The reality of wars of aggression and of military bases is linked to

“interests”, as the US administration calls them. It is linked to the economy. It is an effect of the capitalist economy.

* And as all empires rise, so they also fall. Capitalism’s greed makes its empires even more unstable than past pre-capitalist ones. It is also so dangerous that it is imperative that we work to overthrow it before it ruins the planet.

* Winning over others to our position on Diego Garcia and to our position on the causes of the Diego Garcia problem.

* This, through well-thought out actions keeping the subject alive on the agenda.

* Preparing and proposing strategy upon strategy as the situation changes to put into practice our political aim on the Diego Garcia issue, and on the issues underpinning it.

The military base on Diego Garcia, is central, as

- The cause of the crimes that the British and American state apparatus committed

- The cause of all the suffering of the Chagossians

- The cause of Mauritius being dismembered prior to independence – violating thus the UN Charter.

- The cause of the setting up as late as 1965 of a new anachronistic colony, the British Indian Ocean Territories (BIOT)

And what are the things that cause the need for these forward US military bases?

- Unfettered militarism.

- The perpetuation of colonialism/imperialism, and its persistence till today.

And what is the underlying cause of the US-UK militarism?

- In short, it is the capitalist system, and in particular the three or four fractures it causes for humanity:

- Society is fractured into classes (the modern wage slavery I mentioned earlier over the past 100 years); this causes the vast majority of people to be without a voice against the wars of aggression they do not want.

- Society is still fractures by patriarchal hierarchies (a tiny minority pre-dating capitalism, but persisting throughout its reign and dominating the vast majority)

- The fracture of each human: the hours of our week are separated from

us, considered labour power, and sold (and we cannot live for long without thus selling part of our very lives).

- Human society, while being part of nature, is also fractured from nature – the capitalist system makes humans take nature for something inexhaustible and unruinable.

So, as we struggle towards victory on:

* Base closure and demilitarization of Diego Garcia.

* Complete decolonization of Mauritius, including Chagos.

* The right of return, and freedom of movement over the whole of the Republic of Mauritius.

At the same time as we focus on these issues, we also know that victory will be swifter and more thorough if we understand the broader context of this battle. And this broader context is capitalism. And its overthrow is not too difficult for various reasons, including:

1. Capitalism is relatively new, only from 300 years ago did it come to power here and there.

2. It is inherently unstable.

3. Humans have the fantastic ability to think, organize, plan – and this is what political struggle is.

4. Great Britain had to beat a quick retreat after its 1945 bankruptcy.

5. The US economy is failing – its balance of payments, public debt and private debts are all out of control. It will also need to beat a swift retreat.

And at the same time, the alternative to victory, is too hideous to contemplate:

1. Times ahead of permanent wars, with the increasing risk of nuclear war/accident/incident.

2. Ecological ruin – where a dozen different tipping points are coming into action, any one of which being fatal for human survival, or societal survival.

3. The continuation of the form of dictatorship, including so-called “democracies” that are so little democratic, that the rich become richer and the poor poorer.

We appeal to all who are not branch members of LALIT, to start coming regularly, at least to our open meetings like this one.

So, the struggle continues!

Understanding the dangers before: How the UK-US operate politically



by **RADA KISTNASAMY**

BRITAIN AND THE US each have a state apparatus that is active in different ways to influence, and even control various institutions in countries like Mauritius: state institutions, the media, NGOs, students, ecologists and artists. Otherwise they would have difficulty maintaining military occupation of part of Mauritius. This kind of activity obviously expands and accelerates at key moments like the one Mauritius is going through on the Diego Garcia issue today.

The US, for example, has a plan for each country in the world called SOFA (*Status of Forces Agreement*) whereby they are always inching more military footage in a country like Mauritius. And then the number of scholarships to the US universities suddenly multiplies madly. And they give more and more envelopes of money to NGOs, and have even sponsored a whole village, Anouchka.

As early as in 2013, LALIT and the other organizations with us in Komite Diego wrote an Open Letter to all NGOs in Mauritius warning them of this UK-US way of corrupting NGOs, while continuing a military occupation of Mauritius.

Let's look at how Britain and the US work at this:

SOFA

SOFA (*Status of Forces Agreement*) is one of the “big guns” the US imperialists use to impose their military presence in every country. The US gets democratically elected Governments (and dictators, too) to sign up to a SOFA. It is disguised as benign. It may say there are four US Guards bearing arms at the US Embassy. Then, when a country is in some difficulty or other (usually economic, but it could be political), the use cranks this “status” up – adds a dozen marines, Aid for Immigration Policing, etc. Gradually the US armed forces get more and more “rights” to operate independently of the laws of the host country. American officers end up circulating without any control by the host nation. Gradually military aircraft and “drones” invade airspace, on various pretexts – like piracy by out-of-work fishermen. The Seychelles was forced into a much heightened SOFA when it’s economy went into difficulty because of the Lehmann Brothers’ crash – the main industry in Seychelles was invested there; this problem was then linked to “piracy” and there you have the pretexts.

With the long-term Diego Garcia base, and with the more recent Seychelles SOFA, the US found it lacked a SOFA with Mauritius – to round up its control. So, they tried. In the Wikileaks Cables revelations in 2011, we saw the USA actively working to ratchet up its SOFA with Mauritius, aided and abetted by people like former Justice Minister Rama Valayden and former Mauritian Ambassador in New York Kailash Ruhee. The US ambassador called them “*pro-US men*”. Luckily the project failed because there were enough men who were not “pro-US men” in the Mauritian state apparatus – elected and civil servants.

But SOFA is like a Sword of Damocles. It is always hovering. Especially when we have a Prime Minister, or I should say “yet another Prime Minister”, who is in favour of the military base, and just wants to get the lease money for Mauritius.

Infiltration of US-UK in other Institutions and NGO

The U.S. Embassy in Port Louis offers *Public Engagement Grants Program*” to NGOs – \$1,000 to \$10,000 under project headings like *Women’s Empowerment, Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Youth Empowerment, Environment, Education (including the promotion of*

English language). So they set up a huge variety of grants so as to penetrate Mauritian society through various NGOs. This way they win silence, at times, or collusion, or complete corruption. The US even sent its soldiers right into a Mauritian Primary School to distribute toys to children, thus masking their military purpose completely

The US organizes *Public Speaking* amongst young people in Rodrigues. NGOs like 'Stop Pollution', run campaigns on the environment with US money but without seeing the harm a nuclear base with US money does on Diego Garcia.

When LALIT held its Symposium on NGOs as a phenomenon in July, we drew attention to the way Green Peace ruined its own credibility when it joined the British Government plot to set up a Marine Protected Area around Chagos. The UK sold propaganda that the aim was to protect marine species, and they set a trap for all the ecologists including Greenpeace. They all fell for it. Luckily, other Wikileaks Cables in 2010 came and proved that the a British top officer telephoned the US Ambassador in London to tell him not to worry, the Marine Protected Area was just a ploy for the UK to keep control over Chagos and to prevent the return of the Chagossians. The UNCLOS judgment found the British *Marine Protected Area* illegal. Despite LALIT in an Open Letter to Greenpeace warning them of the trap that had been set for them, this international NGO went ahead saying that they recognize that the Chagossians should return but that they would benefit from this Colonial Marine Park later!

Education and Training

The US Embassy here has a thing called *Uncle Sam's Travelling Library*, that visits all the Primary Schools of the country with a mobile library to encourage reading. At secondary level, there is the *Global Young Leaders Conference* which has a very top-down (empire-down) hierarchical definition of "leaders". Every year hundreds of young people from all over the world get to visit the US, present a project, and return to their country to spread their vision – with their new USA eyes. In the past we have seen the Youth & Sports Ministry here organizing leadership training sponsored by the US Embassy, too. All this, forgetting that the USA is an occupying power.

The British High Commission financed courses in June this year for 26 Chagossians to gain *Employability Skills*. They steal the Islands, and then offer you training in "employability". The courses were organized by the Open University which got money from the British for it. The British High

Commissioner Jonathan Drew said he was satisfied and hoped that he could do further educational projects with Chagossians. Again, all this, forgetting that it means collusion with a colonial power still colonizing part of Mauritius.

There has also been an attempt by the UK to draw artists and actors through scholarships, some as harmless seeming as Komiko's adaptation of Romeo and Juliette.

Conclusion

The UK/USA use all manner of ploys to infiltrate the fabric of society. Sometimes these resemble more sedate versions of dictators – in Haiti Papa Doc or in Cuba before the revolution Batista – hurling sweets at starving crowds of children from their sedan cars.

And today there are NGOs that reach out to catch these short-term apparent “advantages” or “gifts” from the imperialists. But once LALIT and unions like CTSP, groups like MPRB and MLF have exposed the real role behind the UK/USA handouts, people have a moral choice to make and cannot hide behind ignorance any longer.

In 2013 we appealed to NGOs not to take this kind of money. We re-iterate our appeal today, especially at a moment when Chagos is right on the agenda. Their complicity will not be invisible any longer.

It is also the moment to publicly oppose any signature of a SOFA with the USA. And it is not just here in Mauritius that the USA is using these SOFA to infiltrate. It is everywhere. One of the aims of this Conference is to build international solidarity to oppose the state apparatus of Britain and the USA, especially to build solidarity with the people of Britain and the USA against their state apparatuses and their imperialist rule.

**How bases are part of the war
machinery and what to do about
them?**



by **JOSEPH GERSON**

THE UNITED STATES does not build its foreign military bases to provide vacation spots for the US Military. Whether you are looking at Diego Garcia, Ramstein in Germany, Okinawa where the entire island is a military base like Diego Garcia, but bigger.

These are all designed either to prepare for war, to fight war or to engage in combat which may be less than war but much of what is happening across Africa.

So, just to run through some of the elements, the base in Diego Garcia has been used not only to control the Indian Ocean but also for the United States's wars in the Middle East, going back to 1991. You will get Okinawa, the Council General there told me a couple of years ago that the entire island is a base. It was central as an unsinkable aircraft carrier for the US war in Vietnam, training grounds for US marines to fight anywhere in the world. The reality is that with more than 100 military bases and installations in Japan for the United States, its former Prime Minister called it an unsinkable aircraft carrier of the United States and it has this curious arrangement where you have the world third greatest economic power which in many ways still functions as a colony for the United States.

Guam, the poor people are just like the Chagossians. The poor people of

Guam, a third of their islands have been colonized by one country after another, a third of their islands is US naval, air force bases, used deeply not only in the war against Vietnam but also part of a whole structure of containment of China. Just recently, you had US B1s taking off from Guam to run essentially a simulated nuclear attack against North Korea. And, this goes on.

In Central Asia, in the early stages of the Central Asia War, the United States was making deals with dictators so that it could create bases for the transit of troops and supplies. This goes on and on. United States has nearly a thousand foreign military bases. Where some of them may have golf courses on them to keep the troops happy. In fact, they are there for fighting war.

I wish I could say we are more powerful than we are. Over the years, we have a growing network of people who have been, on the one hand, deeply offended and angry over what the bases have inflicted on so called "host communities" when usually forced one way or the other. We have been doing education work and from time to time, we find a way to do a good solidarity action.

Also to say, many of us look at major historical forces and think that they cannot be moved. It was certainly was the case for me during the Vietnam War. We did seemingly everything we could imagine to stop the bombing, stop the killing. We grew frustrated at times but in the end we played a major role in ending that war.

And for many of us, we thought the South Africa racist Apartheid, which has been there since the time we were born, we did everything we could. Step by step, a little drop of water as we could each day, ultimately contributed to the collapse of the racist regime and the emergence of democracy.

The same applies to the Philippines which was a U.S. colony beginning of 1898 but the resistance there over at least a generation led to the withdrawal of the U.S. bases as a result of steady resistance from the people in the Philippines and work and research that a number of us did from the outside.

I came to this issue because there was a plan, back in the Reagan era, to turn Boston Harbour, where I live, into a nuclear weapons base. It had the support of Senator Kennedy, the entire Congressional delegation, entire business community, but with intense commitment, research and organising, we were able to block that and other nuclear home ports.

I am glad of the opportunity to be speaking via Skype to the Conference. I have the greatest respect for the work that David Vine has done to help bring the issue of the oppression of the Chagossian people to the international consciousness and in support of the struggle in court. I look forward to ways

so that we can cooperate in future.

Noel Stott on the Pelindaba Treaty



by NOEL STOTT

At LALIT's International Conference to Free Diego Garcia, Noel Stott spoke by Skype video from South Africa on the Pelindaba Treaty.

Here are excerpts from his talk:

IT'S A PLEASURE to be here and thank you for the opportunity to speak on this issue of the Pelindaba Treaty. As your listeners or participants will know, the Treaty of Pelindaba creates an African-wide Nuclear Weapon Free zone, and it has been in force since July 2009. At the moment, there are 40 ratifications. So, not every country in Africa has ratified the Treaty yet. Nevertheless it has entered into force, and all countries, all States, have in fact signed the Treaty. So that means they are obliged not to do anything that is contrary to the spirit of the Treaty. So, it is in force.

You are correct, in your question, when you say that part of the Treaty is, in fact, to set up a Commission on Nuclear Energy, AFCONE.

Now that has been quite a long process, and the process is still on-going. OK?

Let me deal with the role of the Commission first. There are a variety of roles, but one of the things is for AFCONE to establish what they call a "bureau" which is like a secretariat. And that will be hosted in South Africa. So, obviously there is a process for a host country agreement between the

African union and South Africa. That has been done, and signed last year (2015). So, the actual physical office is being established at this moment (October, 2016). The head of the bureau is an executive Secretary. He has in fact been appointed. And I know that he has arrived in South Africa. [He is Dr Mohamed Derdour.] It's his job to employ other staff and things like that, and get the secretariat, that they call a bureau, up and running.

And obviously the bureau is accountable to a number of Commissioners.

Commissioners have been appointed. And in fact this is the second lot of Commissioners. They are all accountable to the Conference of States Parties, which happens once a year. Now, as far as I know, the Commissioners are, in fact, working — even if the bureau is not yet working. The Commissioners mainly consist of Ambassadors. They are not full time, they work in their respective countries. Their role is, to my knowledge, to set up working groups to look at various aspects of the Treaty.

Now, you've got to understand that the Treaty is both a compliance mechanism in terms of ensuring that the spirit and the law of the Treaty is not violated, and other functions. In other words no country starts building a nuclear weapon or allows a nuclear weapon to be stationed on its territory. That's one role. Importantly, AFCONE and the Treaty itself, is also there to promote the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. And by energy, I don't only mean electricity. It would include the use of nuclear material for medical isotopes, for agriculture, for sterilization of mosquitoes to prevent malaria and so on.

You asked about the International Atomic Energy Agency, the IAEA, and its link to Pelindaba. Now obviously you don't really want a regional body to duplicate the work of an existing body like the IAEA. So there has to be some sort of memorandum of understanding as to how they divide the work up.

I was just looking at the terms of reference of the executive Secretary of AFCONE, or the bureau, and I see one of the points mentioned is to "seek and receive suggestions from States Parties, organizations, agencies and industries regarding the activities of AFCONE". So, I would presume therefore, that as civil society, one could write to the executive Secretary of AFCONE if you have any ideas or any concerns about the Treaty or about its implementation, both positive and negative suggestions and concerns. That is certainly possible. Another way of course would be to try and get invited to the Conference of States Parties. This is because, in terms of compliance, each one of the states parties needs to report to the African Commission on Nuclear Energy as to whether it has put in place effective legislation to ensure that there is no trafficking of nuclear materials on its territory — and no country is allowed to station nuclear weapons on its territory, so there are

quite a lot of issues discussed at this annual Conference, and states parties are supposed to report on these things on a yearly basis.

Maybe I should just say something on another point: you know there is the Treaty, which African states sign and ratify, and then there are a number of protocols. There are 3 protocols that other states, you know the US, UK and Spain, Russia, China, they are all supposed to sign and ratify. It is interesting that the USA has not ratified the protocols. I think it was in 2010 already when Hilary Clinton was Secretary of State, she announced that her Government, the Obama Administration, would ratify. It's now 2016 and it still has not been done. You know the United Kingdom has always argued that the so-called British Indian Ocean Territory cannot be included in the geographical area of the Treaty of Pelindaba. And Russia and also, if your participants know much about international law, when Governments or rather States sign up to or ratify a Treaty, they are allowed to have a reservation. Both Russia and the UK have a reservation regarding Diego Garcia.

**Report from Britain and New York
by Olivier Bancoult**



by **OLIVIER BANCOULT**

THANK YOU LINDSEY, thank you to everyone present. It is a pleasure for me to participate in the conference on Diego. When we received the invitation, we discussed it in the Chagos Committee and the Committee said that we have to participate to make our voice, as Chagosians, heard. It is for this reason, that we are participating in this conference. The Chagos problem also involves you. Today, more than ever, the Chagossian issue is in the limelight, in the news. We cannot speak about Chagos and forget about the suffering of the Chagossians.

We have never hidden the hardship we have endured. You can say that we have lived a nightmare. We were uprooted. Many people sometimes take it the wrong way. They believe that we have a hidden agenda. They wonder what we really want. Our suffering is our suffering. We, too, are Mauritian just like any other, but there is something that separates us from other Mauritians. We still carry the pain of having been uprooted from the land of our birth. In that respect, we have been victimised. Mauritius has rights over the Chagos. There are no two ways about it. It is true, it has a legitimate right, but we cannot forget the Chagossians' rights and we have to remember that all the decisions taken about us, were done without even consulting us.

It's not because we could not read that we were kept outside of it all. There are all the decisions taken from the beginning between the British and

Americans and between the British and Mauritians. All of these taken without even asking our opinion. It has always been with regret for us to say that we were a “dependency of Mauritius” even before the British declared the Chagos, BIOT. We don’t recognise BIOT and neither does Mauritius. Mauritius has its rights, but there are many people at that time who did not give us the importance we deserved. We did not even know our own rights. It may not be the right time to say it, but it is true, we lived *dan zil*, on the islands.

You can be sure that if the British were thinking of doing the same thing in 2016, there would be trouble, a lot of it, especially with Chagossians today. We know our rights. It’s important for people to know, we have never said that Mauritius does not have a right to Sovereignty. It has every right but now more than ever, the Chagossian community has to know theirs.

We had to claim our rights in the Courts in London. We got the results that were needed. But we still feel impoverished. We have known victory. We have known defeat. But what we are sure and certain of is that victory has triumphed, because, we ask for nothing more and nothing less. We want to know our rights. Do we have the right to live on land where we were born? Is it possible for other people to live on the land we were born on and not us? Why can Filipinos, Singaporeans, Sri Lankans, Britons, Mauritians, Americans live on Diego and Chagossians cannot live there? When we ask that question, are we mistaken? When we are saying that, some people see it as a sin. No, this is our right.

When my child asks me, “Papa, where were you born?” I say, “Peros Banhos.” “Where is it?” It is not even on a map. Mauritius should correct this on its map. On the maps sold in Port Louis, there is Rodrigues, the island of Mauritius, Agalega, then there’s only Diego Garcia. There are no other islands, no Salomon, no Peros Banhos, no Three Brothers, no Milieu, no Egmont island. Sovereignty means sovereignty of Mauritius over the Chagos. Chagos is an archipelago made up of many several islands, more than 60.

Today, the Mauritian government is stating that sovereignty and the right of return are inseparable. The government has called upon us to work together. We have to see what we can do to overcome this beast they call Great Britain.

In spite of criticism of us being anti-patriotic, we show that we are wholeheartedly here. We can say that we have never renounced our Mauritian nationality in spite of what some people would have you believe. Even if we are British passport holders, we don’t ignore that. It’s the same as some Mauritians who also have British nationality. We don’t believe that we’re making a mistake by taking British nationality.

On the contrary, some people know it full well; it is precisely what enabled us to take on the British Government in their own courts using legal aid. Consider it, where would we have obtained the money from to seek justice otherwise? You have to be realistic sometimes. Don't take it badly, and say that we have made a major error. I say it again; we have not renounced our Mauritian nationality at any point.

Olivier Bancoult still lives in Mauritius, together with Grup Refizye Chagos. We are still here, even though, we have some of our brothers and sisters in England. We can say, through the initiative that the Government has taken, we have thought about this and if the Mauritian government has the courage to claim sovereignty, we support this but we cannot only emphasise sovereignty. What about the people? You mustn't forget the history, the injustice that has been perpetrated on the people. Today, decisions cannot be made on our behalf without consulting us. In the past, decisions were taken about our lives without consulting us. Nobody who was a part of that delegation even made a visit to see what was there on Diego, what there was on Salomon.

The Government wants to make those two things inseparable. We have made a decision, we have said 'yes'. But, we want you to know, that there has been a lot of pressure on us and that we have not given in to it. That's because we are sincere in our struggle. Just after we met with the Prime Minister, I got a call from the British Embassy. They asked to see me and said it was important to have a meeting. I went with a delegation, members from our group. A communiqué was issued from the Prime Minister's office dated 15th July to say that I and Sir Aneerood have said that sovereignty and the right of return for Chagossians are inseparable.

When we got in touch, the first thing that the British Ambassador, Jonathan Drew, asked me was, is it true that I had said that? I said 'Yes, where is the problem? I hadn't said anything wrong'. He said that he wanted to know. You see, it's like a form of intimidation. He (Ambassador Jonathan Drew) said, 'you have to reflect on what you do'. I told him, I have the right to speak about the issue as a whole, talk about the suffering of the Chagossians. It has carried on. When we decided in our Committee to become part of it, it was done in a very democratic way. The friends from Grup Refizye Chagos spoke, each one in turn, and we made a decision. It was all done in a transparent way. A massive majority said 'yes, if our voice is to be heard, we must go.' There were also friends who opposed it, they said 'no', and some abstained. That is what real democracy is about. Each person voted according to their heart, according to their conscience. We took the decision.

When we arrived at the decision, the Mauritian Government announced it.

We got another call from the British Embassy for me to meet them. At that meeting, I insisted on bringing my lawyer because we know how they function so well. He was a bit scared. I said there is no need for fear, you are protected and I am also protected. We had to be careful that something I didn't say, they may have said that I said, or something that I said, they wouldn't report. In this way, we are both protected. When I got there, the first thing the Ambassador told me was that his Mauritian friend had had told him that I was to be part of the Mauritian delegation. I said, yes I am part of it. He told me, 'can't you see you are being one-sided.' 'How am I one-sided?'

I told him, of all the injustices that the British Government have perpetrated against Chagossians, isn't that 'one-sided?' They roll out the red carpet for refugees in England, not that I am against, 80,000 people from Syria have come to England, but for Chagossians who were uprooted, they do nothing. We've understood that the pressure was not only coming from there but from industry in Mauritius who are saying that what Mauritius is doing could lead to a break in diplomacy. It adds to the already heavy pressure on us. We have not backtracked. We have joined and been a part of it.

On the 6th September, I travelled from Mauritius. On the eve of my departure, the British Embassy called me to say that an email had been sent to me to say that Baroness Anelay, wanted to meet me during my trip in England. [I had to go to England because of a health issue that my child had and then I was going to meet the Mauritian delegation in the UN.] I said yes, ok but on condition that I bring my lawyer. They said that the Baroness would not have a lawyer present, that it would be a tête-à-tête with the Baroness. We made several propositions about who was to accompany me, but they refused. Finally we discussed it among the Mauritian delegation and I went.

The Baroness said that her Government is working on a review concerning housing which will be done at the end of the year. I told her that the Chagossian community will not be able to wait any longer because the land is ours. It cannot be, that every time a decision is made, nothing is done; we cannot wait for yet another decision to be made.

The second item she proposed was that £20,000 would be made available to the Chagossian community if they had a project. I told her frankly that I did not come here for only one group. I come on behalf of the whole Chagossian community. I have to tell you that this money was left over for a trip that was postponed from 2013 for a visit to the Chagos. The trip never happened. The money was to be divided into three; between Chagossians in Mauritius, the UK and the Seychelles. Honestly, I have to say that I do not accept this.

I was part of the Mauritian delegation just as the Committee had decided.

It was such a pleasure for me to be part of the Mauritian delegation. I was lucky enough to participate in a bilateral meeting together with the Mauritian Prime Minister between him and Boris Johnson, the British Foreign Minister. Chagossians have to participate in all discussions concerning the Chagos. It's time to stop this nonsense of decisions being made for us. We also have the capacity to make our own voice heard. Stop making decisions on our behalf without consulting us. That is something of the past.

Today Sir Aneerood Jugnauth has given me the opportunity, as representative of the Chagossians, to say whatever has to be said to Boris Johnson, Foreign Minister of Britain. Boris Johnson asked whether Chagossians will agree to there being a base on Diego. To be honest, if Diego is good for Filipinos, for Singaporeans, for Sri Lankans, then, why is it not good for Chagossians?

Chagossians can live on the Chagos. I made it known to Boris Johnson what Chagossians want. If we base ourselves on the KPMG Final Report [Jan 2015], it said that there are no legal barriers that stop Chagossians from returning to the Chagos including Diego Garcia. Diego Garcia has existing facilities where we can restart our lives. The problem is that Chagossians are still being prevented from returning to the Chagos. The advantage we have had is to make the voice of Chagossians heard. We have to continue based on this first step that has been made. Any discussion on the Chagos, Chagossians have to be active participants in all discussions.

We understand that all Mauritians can go to Chagos. Chagos belongs to Mauritius, all Mauritians have the right to say that. But we must not forget that we, as Chagossians have been victimised. That is not the same for other Mauritians. We are claiming our rights. It is a legitimate right to return to the land of our birth.

Thank you all.

**Diego Garcia: The danger of the
UK-USA using the Mauritian
bourgeoisie**



by **RAJNI LALLAH**

These were the notes in English for Rajni Lallah's speech (in Kreol) at the LALIT Second International Conference on Diego Garcia.

IN THIS CONFERENCE, we analyse the US and UK in terms of their role as States. People often speak of “US interests”, UK “interests”, but when we have a closer look, we see that these interests are not the interests of ordinary people in the US and UK. Ordinary people in the UK and USA have no interest in uprooting people from Chagos, occupying the Chagos and setting up a military base on Diego Garcia. So when we talk of the “interests” of the US and UK, we come to realise that these States, if we let them, are at the service of the most powerful sections of their capitalist class.

Here in Mauritius as well, there are certain “interests” that the Mauritian State serves. And these “interests” explain why Prime Minister Jugnauth backed down and accepted to give the UK 6 more months for empty talk instead of going through with the ICJ motion at the UN General Assembly.

It is rare that we manage to see clearly what these “interests” are. The State does not tell us openly what these interests are – so they usually remain invisible. But sometimes, on rare occasions when things move quickly in different directions, these interests become visible.

Where? In a notable newspaper editorial that represents the dominant

section of Mauritian capital. A month ago, on Sunday 28 August, there was an editorial by a *L'Express* editorialists (or a group of editorialists) signed “KC Ranze”.

This editorial appeared some two and a half months after the UK-USA took a joint-stand (the first of its kind in history, the USA always having pretended to refuse to take sides on the issue of sovereignty) threatening “lasting damage” to relations with Mauritius if the Mauritian State persists in its action to decolonise Chagos.

We can imagine how between June and August the US Embassy and British High Commission that represent their respective States in Mauritius have actively worked to get allies within Mauritius. After all, that is the kind of work Wikileaks Cables exposed, when US Embassy officials in Mauritius report to their Secretary of State bosses, as being the usual day-to-day work Embassies do: they summon people whose interests would be affected by such “lasting damage” – CEO’s of textile exporters, canned tuna exporters to the UK/US; hotel group CEO’s that rely on tourism from Britain, and editorialists of newspapers that represent these interests amongst others. And in these secret meetings they warn these businessmen and their ideologues of the damage to their profits if the UK/USA puts the brakes on their exports if they permit their Government go ahead with reclaiming the Chagos.

So this is the context when we read the *L'Express Dimanche* KC Ranze editorial on 28 August that states, “Now that the Prime Minister has established the motion being presented in the UN General Assembly on 13 September, he should consider suspending this action for some 6 months if he gets a dignified and sincere offer.” This is exactly the scenario that the Prime Minister ended up falling into at the UN General Assembly. We should remember that the expression “sincere and dignified offer” in Mauritius, is the language used when someone is selling out. To explain what they got for themselves to sell-out, they say, “Well, we got a sincere and dignified offer”.

Prime Minister Jugnauth agreed to a 6 month delay in good faith, when throughout 50 years, the UK and US have acted in bad faith. The motion will have to be resuscitated, although it remains on the agenda – if nothing happens after 6 months: it will not even automatically revive.

So finally, whose interests is the Prime Minister Jugnauth defending? Not our interests, that is to say not the interests of people in Mauritius, Rodrigues, Agalega and Chagos. For once, the answer is very clear. The interests that KC Ranze, the *L'Express* editorialist/s defend are that of capitalist exporters to the UK and US.

When we take a close look at what has happened, it is easy to understand

why in these 50 years, when sugar was still King, when the backbone of the economy was sugar exports to the UK, no government has ever had the courage to challenge the British State. It was only in December 2010, at a time when exports to the UK had considerably decreased that the Mauritian State, in response to pressure from the First LALIT International Conference on Diego Garcia, and also in response to Britain's defensive move to set up a Marine Protected Area, initiated the first legal challenge against the UK. The Marine Protected Area was designed, as the Wikileaks Cables showed, as a ploy to stop Chagossians from returning to the Chagos; but it enraged the Mauritian State. And significantly, this came at a time when exports to the UK had decreased.

And now, after Brexit, local capitalist exporters to the UK are worried about what will happen to their own commercial interests. That is all they manage to see. They cannot see the big picture: that the UK is isolated from the rest of Europe, and is relatively weak and in no position to dictate terms.

The US is different from the UK in that it doesn't even take the trouble to hide the interests it defends. The US does not even bother to negotiate agreements with countries in Africa. It decides them unilaterally. It says "I'm the one that decides the terms and I will boycott trade with you if you are not servile to my interests". This is in a nutshell what the law voted by American Congress, the *African Growth and Opportunities Act* says. In this law, it states clearly that for capitalists of an African country to get access, sometimes duty-free access, to the US market that that country should do nothing to undermine US foreign policy interests or national security. The US President reviews each and every African country to check whether these conditions are being met. He can "suspend" an African country whenever he wants to. So, it is pure economic blackmail.

It is a classic carrot-and-stick law. It even has an expiry date – it was to have expired in 2008, but has gotten various extensions up till now. So once capitalists and their States are caught by the bait of the carrot, there is no longer any need for the law.

So we need to remember when there is talk of "pressure" on the Mauritian State, that this "pressure" is exerted most often through Mauritian capitalists. This reminds us of the importance of struggling not only for the political decolonisation, but also for economic decolonisation. It reminds us that we need to go further to stop the Mauritian capitalist class being a transmission belt for the UK/US: we need to struggle to ensure that ordinary people: workers, women, small-scale planters, fisherpeople, animal breeders, small producers, pensioners – need to collectively control the land, the sea, the economy and production.

“While military bases are hard to close, there are weaknesses we can exploit”



by **WILBERT VAN DER ZEIJDEN**

LALIT has pleasure in publishing the notes to which Wilbert van der Zeijden, international guest at the LALIT Conference on Diego Garcia, spoke on 2 October, 2016 at Grand River North West.

IT IS HARD to close bases because firstly, they are very “useful” to the USA in its policy of dominating the world. Diego Garcia, looking ahead, is not likely to diminish in utility, as it had seemed to be likely to a few years ago with the shift to the Pacific. So, while the base is not indispensable, it is nevertheless “useful” to the USA. Diego Garcia is a central point for supporting US military operations in both Asia and Africa. Asia is important because of growing competition from China as it challenges US hegemony over trade routes in the Indian Ocean, and in Africa we have seen a growth in numbers of US military bases and facilities. For example, the recent one in Niger; it may be “small” and “temporary” and “just for drones”, but it is no longer zero. This is what is important about opposing SOFAs (*Status of armed Forces Agreements*) as was mentioned by Rada in his talk, SOFAs that the USA tries to get every country in the world to sign up to.

Military bases have a political utility, not just a military one. They tie other States into the US security system. Allowing or even tolerating the presence of a US military base shows intent to cooperate. But it can become a bargaining chip at the same time.

Bases also have cultural and economic utility. Symbolically, they show off American confidence. Or, if the USA allows one base to be closed down by protests, it unveils a lack of confidence, and may trigger more protest against other bases. So, we should not underestimate their symbolic importance.

It is hard to get bases closed because for the USA, it is “costly” in both money and political terms. So, the US will only do it under strong political

pressure. As in the Philippines and in Ecuador there was.

There is also the problem that many host governments are complicit.

And, at the same time, there is no international law that prohibits the stationing of troops in someone else's country, if both countries enter into the arrangement voluntarily. So as part of a struggle, for example, there is no Court you can go to, no treaty you can invoke to argue the US and the UK out of Diego Garcia. You have to fight politically.

This brings me to why sovereignty over Diego Garcia is such an important issue – in relation to base closure. And why what is happening at the moment in the UN is so important.

This is because, if Mauritius has the full sovereignty and can execute it, there ARE international rules that can be invoked to push the Americans out, and to get the base closed down. But then again, winning sovereignty will not be easy precisely because it is a way to get the base closed.

And, of course, the international system dealing with issues of sovereignty was set up by, and is still dominated by and used by, exactly the same powers that Mauritius is challenging for sovereignty. The threat letters, including the joint US-UK one, are evidence of how seriously they are taking this Mauritian effort, as was the idea of a setting up a Marine Protected Area in order to keep Mauritius at bay. This sort of pressure will only get worse.

Either way, there is still a fair chance that Mauritius may succeed in exercising full sovereignty over the Chagos Islands. This is because, while the system that these powers have built may be hard to break, it is now old, and it is battered. The US and the UK are losing control of their system, even though it was so carefully crafted to serve their purposes. The UNCLOS verdict is an example of that, but the cracks are bigger than only that.

In addition, there are a couple of weaknesses that we can exploit:

- The system of control is based on secrecy. It does not deal well with transparency. And now the world is no longer a place in which you can easily maintain secrecy in general, or tell contradicting stories at different places, or where you can keep certain deals a secret. So, one of the key assumptions i.e. secrecy is under siege.
- The old system of control is based on information superiority of the big powers, and the internet is undermining that, fast.
- The system is based on economic superiority but the USA-UK are losing ground to other powers, especially China, but also a series of other countries.
- The system is based on clientelism, on the host country hoping for

favours, but we can see on other issues how States can form new alliances and defy ‘the big guns’.

- The UN lately has taken up decolonisation again, framing it as an unended project.
- We have seen other struggles to close bases down win!

Second question I want to get into, is on strategy on achieving sovereignty and the right to return.

What we can learn from recent international campaigns that have dealt with different, but in some senses quite similar issues? And I’m thinking mostly about the so-called “humanitarian disarmament campaigns” of the past year, leading to the *Cluster Munitions Convention*, the *Landmine Treaty*, the *Arms Trade Treaty* and even more of the setting up of the *International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons*(ICAN) over the past 5 years, successfully pushing for an international treaty banning nuclear weapons, and leading to their elimination.

What these campaigns, especially ICAN, share with your campaign is

- Longevity of the issue
- Entrenched positions
- Big powers blocking smaller powers
- Systemic injustice
- General feeling in the past that ‘it cannot be solved’.

I’m not asking you to agree with the politics of any of these campaigns, but to think along with me and see if there are lessons that these campaigns learned that are transferable to your struggle for sovereignty and the right to return. Here’s a couple of the lessons that come from a conference I attended with strategists of these campaigns:

1. Position the affected civilians in the forefront of your campaign and make them central to it. They are your primary constituents. Modern movements are helped by, but do not rely on, mass support, but on visible support from the people directly affected.
2. Build your political alliance as broad as you can and nurture the weakest links. Include as many states as you can from the start and invest in keeping them on board. A group of about 15 committed states is enough to end up with a treaty.
3. Demand full openness, especially from your allies, also from your enemies. Invest in *Freedom of Information Acts*, in clarifying talks and in “fact-establishing” publications. Use any unwillingness to be

transparent to your favour.

4. Build your own proposal. Instead of reacting to existing plans and visions, push your own.
5. Make as many allies that you work with part of every little victory, as well as making other entities part of these victories. It will bind them. Be clear from the start what constitutes defeat. What are the red lines? Find them. And do not cross them.
6. And the most important one: Of course remember that *it can be done!* When the cluster munitions campaign started, everyone said it could never succeed. Because the big states would never join, because the technology is already out there, because the system is against you, etc. And still they succeeded. Same with the Landmine campaign. And only last week, South Africa, Mexico, New Zealand, Thailand and Brazil proposed in the UN General Assembly a resolution on behalf of 119 states that will lead to negotiations on a treaty banning all nuclear weapons in 2017. Do you know anyone who said that could be done? After 50 years inaction? Sounds familiar?

**Who are our allies in the struggle
over Diego Garcia/Chagos?**



by **ALAIN AH-VEE**

Sa lartik la baze lor nots Alain Ah-Vee pu so diskur dan Konferans Internasional LALIT le 2 Oktob 2016. Li divize an 6 parti.

Kisannla nu alye?

1. Dan Nasyon Zini

Depi kumans gayn fwit lor konplo Britanik-Amerikin pu detas Chagos depi Moris, depi lerla-mem finn ena pei ki finn lev lavwa dan Nasyon Zini kont demanbreman teritwar Moris kuma enn fason deturn prosesis de-kolonizasyon.

Alor, nu premye alye ti anfet bann Leta ki finn proteste formelman.

An 1965, kan sertin pei aprann ki Britanik ena lintansyon detas Chagos depi Moris zis avan Lindepandans, zot fer Nasyon Zini vot Rezolisyon 2066 (XX), enn rezolizyon ki konsern spesifikman Moris, setadir spesifikman konspirasyon pu fer demanbreman Moris atraver detas Chagos. Rezolisyon la, li vinn rapel responsabilite pei ki pe administre so koloni pu li napa pran okenn aksyon pu demantel sa teritwar la.

Ala enn extre seki UN Resolution 2066 vote an 1965 dir:

“The General Assembly... Noting with deep concern that

any step taken by the administering Power to detach certain islands from the Territory of Mauritius for the purpose of establishing a military base would be in contravention of the Declaration, and in particular of paragraph 6 thereof....

“Invites the administering Power to take no action which would dismember the Territory of Mauritius and violate its territorial integrity;...”

Rezolisyon la pe dimann ki Gran Bretayn napa pran okenn aksyon ki pu demanbre teritwar Moris e ki pu vyol so integrite teritoryal. Ena 89 pei ki ti vot pur, 18 pei finn abstenir. Pena okenn,okenn pei ki finn vot kont, setadir okenn pei pa finn sutenir UK.

Rezolisyon la osi dir bizin inplemant Rezolisyon 1514 (XV) 1960, setadir 5 an avan.

Ala seki Rezolisyon 1514 (XV) ,14 Desam 1960 dir:

*“Believing that the process of liberation is irresistible and irreversible and that, in order to avoid serious crises, **an end must be put to colonialism** and all practices of segregation and discrimination associated therewith...*

*“**Immediate steps shall be taken, in Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories or all other territories which have not yet attained independence, to transfer all powers to the peoples of those territories, without any conditions** or reservations, in accordance with their freely expressed will and desire, without any distinction as to race, creed or colour, in order to enable them to enjoy complete independence and freedom.*

*“**Any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and the territorial integrity of a country is incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.**”*

Rezolisyon 1514 byin kler lor rol Nasyon Zini setadir pu asire ki prosesis dekolonizasyon konplete dan tu pei, ki drwa imin ek integrite teritoryal respekte dan sak pei. Li proklam nesosite amenn lafin kolonialism, ki bizin pran mezir imedya (pa 50 an apre!) lor tu teritwar ki pankor gayn Lindependans pu transfer puvwar ar zot lepep. Li osi dir ki ninport ki tantativ ki viz pu kas integrite teritoryal enn pei li inkonpatib avek Sart Nasyon Zini. Li pa ti dir pran enn but Moris, al invariant enn nuvo koloni 5 an apre Rezolisyon 1514, apel li BIOT!

Dan Explanatory Note pu mosyon lor Chagos ki Guvernman Moris fek inskrir divan Lasanble Zeneral Nasyon Zini an Septam 2016, li finn expoz seki UK sipoze pa fer kuma li spesifye klerman dan Rezolisyon 2066:

“General Assembly drew attention to the duty of the administering Power to take effective measures with a view to the immediate and full implementation of resolution 1514 (XV) and invited ‘the administering Power to take no action which would dismember the Territory of Mauritius and violate its territorial integrity.’”

Anfet ena plizir rezolisyon anfaver Moris ki finn vote dan Nasyon Zini: ala zot nimeru respektiv. Rezolisyon 1654, Rezolisyon 1810, Rezolisyon 2066 (ki nu finn mansyone lao), Rezolisyon 2232, Rezolisyon 2357.

Kan nu get seki Sart Nasyon Zini dir e tusa Rezolisyon la, tu pei manb Nasyon Zini swa vreman alye Moris lor problem Chagos, ubyin omwin zot ti sipoze alye Moris lor la.

2. Diverzans alinteryer diferan but dan Leta UK ek US

Parfwa u kapav gayn alye depi drol plas.

Par exanp dan enn but Leta Britanik.

Leta Britanik ek Ladministrasyon Amerikin zot pa enn blok monolitik, e sakenn pa enn blok monolitik nonpli.

Dan Parlman an Langleter ena depite ki sutenir lalit anfaver Chagos, ena *Chagos Islands All Party Parliamentary Group* ki ti met dibut an 2008. Sa grup Parlmanter Britanik la finn sutenir Chagosyin sirtu otur bann ka lakur. Depite dan sa grup la suvan pe sulev kestyon lor problem Chagos ki akil Premye Minis Britanik. Ena plizir depite UK ki anfaver drwa-retur e finn pran pozisyon avek Guvernman Moris ek GRC lor sa size la.

Dan Lamerik, parey. Dan USA ena kuran ki anfaver diminye depans militer, par exanp. Ena mem but dan laparey deta ki anfaver ferm sertin baz militer akoz ku pu antretenir zot tro elve. Sa kuran la li mem existe alinteryer tulde gran parti, Demokrat ek Repiblikin.

Parmi lepep Amerikin, sa tandans la byin for.

An 2012 enn ‘survey’ ti truve ki 2/3 parmi elektek Repiblikin ek 9 lor 10 Demokrat anfaver diminye depans militer.

Dan enn ‘survey’ ki *Voice of the People* finn fer an Mars 2016, 61% elektek finn dir zot anfaver diminye depans militer. Kriz ekonomik ki pe persiste dan

Leta Zini pe donn ankor pwa sa kuran la.

Ena osi enn lel dan administrasyon USA ki pros ar Leta Lostrali, ki anfaver buz prezans militer USA pre ar Lostrali pu ki li pli kapav sirvey Lasinn, akoz nuvo sityasyon zeo-politik kot Lasinn pe vinn enn pwisans ekonomik, e kot USA pe rod “kontenir Lasinn”, pu servi so terminoloji. Ena parmi yerarsi militer dan Leta Zini ki pe mem koz anfaver deplas baz Diego Garcia an antye ver Coco Islands (Get lartik *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 Mars 2012) etan done sa nuvo kontex la ek osi parski dapre zot Coco Islands pli aproprye pu stasyonman e pu aterisaz dronn.

Dan enn rapor ki Pentagon finn sumet Kongre dan Leta Zini an Fevriye 2016, zot finn demontre ki larme pe servi pre 22% plis lespas instalasyon ek infrastruktitir ki li anfet vremem bizin. Zot finn mem menas dan rapor la ki, si bizin, zot pu azir san lotorizasyon Kongre pu eliminann gaspiyaz ki pe ena lor infrastruktitir militer (*www.militarytimes.com*).

Me seki pli inportan se ki dan USA ena sirtu lorganizasyon ki milit aktivman kont lager, ki fer kanpayn kont baz militer dan USA e ayer. Ena plizir parmi ki finn sutenir nu Konferans Internasyonal; u kapav lir zot mesaz lor pano deor dan kyosk. Ena osi trwa dimunn ki dan sa kuran anti-militaris dan USA ki finn pran laparol dan nu Konferans yer ek zordi.

3. Kan azir u gayn alye

Nu finn truve kimanyer, tutswit kan Moris desid pu al ver met ka divan Lakur Internasyonal Lazistis (ICJ), plizir regroupman rezyonal pei ek regroupman internasyonal diferan Leta finn sutenir muv Guvernman Moris. Finn ena *Linyon Afrikin*, *Konferans Parلمانter Commonwealth*, *Muwman Non Aliyne*, pei Lafrik, Karaib, Pasifik dan *ACP*, *Grup 77* ek osi Lasinn.

* Kan azir, lerala u donn lokazyon u alye koste pu sutenir u. Sa li vre sirtu kan azir avek prinsip. U pu gayn buku alye, u pu elarzi sutyin pu aksyon u pe amene e u pu ranforsi u lalit. Li dan sa kontex la ki dan LALIT, nu tultan met lanfaz, kan pe angaze dan aksyon lor problem Chagos, ki li inportan ki gard ansam sa trwa demand: anfaver ferm baz, anfaver dekolonizasyon ek anfaver drwa retur. Nu truve ki demand pu fermtir baz li santral ladan. Kan USA finn met enn baz Diego Garcia, li vedir teritwar Moris ki su lokipasyon militer parski Diego form parti nu teritwar. Enn baz li enn linstriman deger, tu seki lor baz la servi pu alimant lager. Ninport ki travay ki ena lor enn baz militer form parti lantretyin arsenal militer. Donk li kontribye dan furni lager. Anfet, nu ti bizin apel pu enn boykot travay lor baz militer Amerikin lor Diego

Garcia.

Kuma nu finn truve lor kestyon Chagos-Diego, alye pa manke. Sa li anparti parski li kontenir dan limem plizir isyu kuma dekolonizasyon, fermtir baz militer, lape, anti zarm nikleer, drwa linformasyon, lalit fam, proteksyon lanvironnman. Tultan diferan lorganizasyon finn zwenn dan sa lalit la kuma bann alye.

* Lane 1970: fam Chagosyin, mamb MLF, LALIT deklas, Organizasyon Fraternel, Brans MMM Bain des Dames, lasosyasyon sosyal ti divan-divan dan mobilizasyon.

* Lane 1990: Komite Rann nu Diego/ GRC, LALIT; Greenpeace desid pu met enn bato a nu dispozisyon, me problem pratik anpes enn vizit.

* Lane 2000: WSF Mumbai 2004: Delegasyon LALIT ek GRC prepar plan *Flotila Lape* pu al Diego. (Atraver internet nu ti deza gayn plis ki 100 risponns pozitif depi dimunn avek tipti bato pu zwenn dan sa laflot pu al Diego. Pandan WSF Mumbai ti ena anmemtan plizir rankont internasyonal.

- Dan enn Lasanble Rezo Internasyonal *No Bases* ki finn adopte plan flotila LALIT, e inklir baz Diego parmi 4 baz priyoriter dan kanpayn internasyonal kont baz militer.

- Dan Lasanble Zeneral *Muvman Mondyal Anti Lager* (kot manb LALIT ti pran laparol lor nom *No Bases*) ti adopte stratezi pu opoz tu baz militer ek kanpayn lor 4 baz priyoriter.

- Dan Lasanble Konzwin Aktivis Sosyal ek MAL (ankor enn fwa LALIT pran laparol, sann fwa la lor nom *Muvman Anti-Lager*) ki pran rezolisyon anfafer ferm baz militer etranzer partu dan lemond.

* Mars 2007: Dan Moris plizir federasyon sindikal, lasosyasyon sutenir Konferans Internasyonal *No Bases* pu abolisyon tu baz etranze dan lemond, ki ti ena Ekwador. LALIT siyn lapel internasyonal e prezan laba dan Quito e dan Karavann kont Baz ziska Manta, kot baz US anfet ferme lane apre.

* Konferans Internasyonal LALIT lor Diego Garcia 2010: Sutyin depi buku lorganizasyon kuma War Resisters International, Bertrand Rusell Peace Foundation, US Peace Council, Veterans for Peace, UK (Socialist Resistance), e depi lorganizasyon dan Lafrans, Lairland, Litali, Lostrali, Nuvel Zeland, Sid Afrik, Zapon, Mozanbik, Larenyon e osi depi Freine Ginwala(ex-Spiker Parlman pos-Aparteid Sid Afrik), David Vine, John Pilger, Sean Carey, Philipa Gregory.

* Konferans LALIT lor Diego 2016: Lalist byin long seki finn sutenir Konferans aktyel, me li inklir CND (UK), CND (Edinbourg), Global Network against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space, Parti Ouvrier Independent

Democratique (Lafrans), World Beyond War, Women's Internatioanl League for Peace and Freedom, CODEPINK, Namibi Marxist Group, Open World Conference, Grup anti baz militer dan Guam, Porto Rico, Hawaii ek plizir individi.

Anfet finn ena 3 kalite aksyon sutyin pu sa konferans 2016 la: ena grup ek individi ki finn avoy let pu sutenir nu Konferans, ena ki finn ekrir Premye Minis UK ek Prezidan USA plis finn ena diskur lor Konferans LALIT ek problem Chagos-Diego dan lezot rasanbleman (World Beyond War, Washington kot David Vine ti koze 23-25 Septam), Agneta Norberg sulev Diego dan konferans Norvez; Alan Benjamin rebran kestyon dan Open World Conference, Joseph Gerson ek lezot finn sulev kestyon Diego dan International Peace Congress, Berlin an 30 Septam-2 Oktob).

Li interesan note ki plizir lorganizasyon ek individi ki ti sutenir, e mem ti prezan dan Konferans LALIT an 2010, zot osi sutenir ubyin prezan an 2016. Zordi kan pe ariv lafin bay UK-USA lor Diego, kan Guvernman Moris finn inskrir suverennte Chagos lor azanda Nasyon Zini, ena ankor plis neseseite pu devlop ek konsolid sutyin lepep onivo rezyonal ek internasyonal ek anmemtan pu prepare kont bann manev UK-US.

4. Manev UK-US finn dire depi 50an e pe kontiyne

Kuma dan lefase, nu kapav atann tu kalite manev, pyez, konplo depi Leta Britanik ek inperyalist USA.

* Manev UK-US: Pandan 50 an finn ena mansonz, sekre, konplo, inpinite. Lakur Britanik finn expoz sa klerman dan tu Zizman dan bann ka Bancoult.

* Amerikin ti dir sanse zot bizin Diego pu konstrir enn sinp "Sant Kominikasyon". Manti. Britanik finn tultan fer kwar ki pena abitan lor Chagos dan enn fason permanan. Manti. UK ek US ti deklare sanse zot pu return Chagos ek Diego ar Moris kan zot nepli pu bizin arsipel la pu bezwin defans dan kad Lager Frwad. Manti. Zordi kan Lager Frwad fini, aster zot dir bizin baz Diego aköz terorism. Ankor manti. Anfet zot servi baz pu atak lezot lepep, kuma dan Lirak ek Afghanistan. Bann Britanik ti mem dekret enn Park Marin otur Chagos swadizan pu protez lanivironnman. Manti. Kab Wikileaks finn expoz sa kuma enn sinp manev. Alor, sa inpinite kolonyal pe kontiyne dan 3yem milener.

* UK ek USA finn tultan azir an sekre, deryer ledö zot prop lepep. Sa li inportan. Li expoz mank demokrasi. Li expoz seki zot-mem zot apel enn "Black Site", setadir enn baz sekre. Guvernman Angle ti konturn so prop

Parlman, li ti servi *Orders in Council* Larenn pu kree BIOT (byot!). Zot finn konturn zizman Lakur ki dan faver Chagosyin par nuvo *Orders in Council*.

* Britanik finn bafwe lalwa internasyonal, Sart Nasyon Zini, Rezolisyon UN, Konvansyon UN (UNCLOS, Konvansyon kont klersterbom ek armaman anti-personel), Trete Pelindaba.

* Zordi kan Moris buze pu met ka ICJ, ki zot fer. USA-UK tir enn Kominike Konzwin kot zot kareman menas Moris, servi santaz kri. UK fer intimidasyon kont port parol GRC. UK reysi zel deba ek votman lor mosyon Moris dan UN ziska Zin 2017.

5. Rol Leta Moris.

Leta pa “neutre”. E leta Moris, li pa enn eksepsyon. Li reprezant lintere ekonomik burzwazi lokal.

- Diferan rezim depi lindependans finn plito kurbe divan USA-UK, zot finn rod lavantaz ekonomik depi USA-UK. Dan bann lane 1970 Parti Travayist ek PMSD finn mem servi represyon kont manifestasyon fam Chagosyin ek fam LALIT. An 2000 guvernman MSM-MMM ti deklare ki zot anfaver USA mintenir baz Diego. MSM-MMM an 2002 ti fer reprezantan Moris dan UN vot anfaver USA pu deklans lager kont Lirak – asterla rekoni onivo internasyonal kuma enn lager ilegal. MSM-PT-PMSD finn ankuraz komers avek Diego Garcia e otoriz ravitayman Diego depi Moris. PT-PMSD finn furni ros-makadam US pu extansyon ek konsolidasyon baz Diego. E sa pe kontiye ziska zordi.

Diferan guvernman finn tultan fer bel diskur anfaver dekoloniz Chagos – dan UN e dan lezot forum – me zame zot pa finn ena enn plan dansanb kot inform e mobiliz popilasyon. Seki bizin fer. Bizin egz enn dat pu transfer suverennte depi UK a Moris. Bizin etablir enn road map pu demantel, ferm ek fer netwayaz ekolojik Diego.

An zeneral nu truve ki pa kapav fye nek lor parti tradisyonel opuvwar ek dan lopoziyon. Fode LALIT finn met buku presyon politik pandan plizir deseni lor Leta Moris pu ki alafin, Guvernman Ramgoolam finn al UNCLOS, e asterla Guvernman Jugnauth finn al Lasanble Zeneral UN pu enn Rezolisyon pu al ICJ pu enn Advisory Opinion.

6. Lalit pli larz

Malgre ena buku pei ki alye ar Moris lor kestyon Chagos dan UN, dan plizir linstans Rezyonal ek Internasyonal osi, UK ek USA finn, e pe kontiyn, persiste azir kont prinsip UN, kont lalwa internasyonal. Prosesis dekolonizasyon Moris pankor termine. Baz militer Diego tuzur lamem, dinite Chagosyin ek Morisyin pe kontiyn bafwe.

Alye parmi bann pei li bon. Me, li pa ase. Zis fye lor UN, sa osi, li pa ase. UN li finn etablir par rapor defors dan faver pei pwisan ki finn gayn zyem Ger Mondyal. (Tu pei ki ti opoz rezim Lalmayn Nazi ti form parti seki ti apel pei “alye”, e parmi ena UK ek USA). Ziska ler zot bann pei pli pwisan ki suvan dan moman kle servi zot puvwar dan UN pu blok ubyin frenn aplikasyon sertin rezolision.

Akoz samem li neseseer gayn sutyin konsyan e bizin ede ver mobilizasyon lepep dan USA, dan UK ek dan lezot pei. Bizin ogmant presyon popiler lor diferan guvernman dan lemond.

Ena enn lalit pli larz deryer lalit pe ferm baz militer, kont lager. Ena neseseite enn long lalit pu kontrol teritwar – setadir pu enn kontrol demokratik lor later ek lor lamer. Teritwar (later ek lamer) pa ti oredi servi pu fer lager ni pu profi kapital. Me, pu ki dimunn ena travay, ena lozman, ena enn lavi ere.

Anfet deryer problem Chagos, ena lintere kapital. Lintere kapital lokal (reprezantan burzwazi Maurice Paturau ti prezan, par exanp, dan delegasyon Morisyin ofisyel Lond an 1965). Burzwazi Moris finn tultan alye ekonomik USA ek UK aköz li ti export disik, tekstil, aköz li rod lavantaz su African Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA).

Ena osi lintere kapitalist USA ek UK dan lindistri zarm. Ena gro gro konpayni ki prodir dronn pu sirveyans, ena firm prive ansarz sekirite e ena lezot ki pe kareman rod rant dan biznes later ki deza dan Diego. Kan koz USA ek UK, pe fer referans avantu a lintere burzwazi sa 2 pei la (ena osi dirizan dan ladministrasyon US ki zot-mem ena aksyon dan lindistri armaman). Zot ena lintere finansye dan sa rezo baz militer, dan tu sa zuti, tu sa linstriman pu fer lager. Lepep USA ek UK pena lintere ki zot pei kontiyn finans baz militer. Lepep ena plis lintere pu leta ogmant depans dan kreasyon lanplwa, lozman, ledikasyon, lasante, dan mwins represyon pa plis.

Alor ena enn neseseite liye lalit Chagos-Diego ar lalit pli larz kont sistem ekonomik global. E li dan sa lalit pli larz la kot ena pli gran alye: sa li klas travayer lemond. Li sel lafors ki kapav vmem garanti enn lavenir san lager inperyalis, garanti enn lalit kont sistem sirveyans par dronn, kont prodiksyon zarm nikleer e pu enn lemond kot egalite, liberte ek lape ki reyne. Klas travayer ena enn lintere pu enn sosyete sosyalist.

Dismantling Global Military Bases



BY J. NARAYANA RAO

LALIT has pleasure in publishing the speech of Jammu Narayana Rao, Director Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space, delivered at the International Conference on Diego Garcia on 2 October, 2016.

SEVENTY YEARS AGO the Second World War came to an end with the defeat of Fascism and Nazism. The allied forces have collectively achieved this despite the western powers tried to back stab the USSR which was challenging a capitalist order of Governance and Economy. On 9 May 2015 Russia observed the 70th year of ending fascism. But the west has ignored it as if they are unhappy with the defeat of Hitler and fascism.

The vision of Hitler to dominate the world has been inherited by the Rulers of United States of America to build an Empire. While retaining the Military Bases which were established during the Second World War, new bases have been established throughout the world. Nick Turse an investigating journalist and a fellow at the Harvard University's Radcliffe Institute states that "In 1955, 10 years after world war II ended, the Chicago daily Tribune published a major investigation of Bases including a map dotted with little stars and triangles, most of them clustered in Europe and the Pacific. The American flag flies over more than 300 overseas outposts".

According to Jules Dufour, President of the United Nations Association of Canada The US military has bases in 63 countries and 244,065 military

personnel deployed worldwide by US. The facilities in these bases include 845,441 different buildings and equipments. The land surface is of the order of 30 million acres. According to Gelman, who examined, 2005 official Pentagon data, the US is controlling a total of 737 bases in foreign lands. Adding to the bases inside U.S territory, the total land area occupied by US military bases domestically within the US and internationally is of the order of 2,202,735 hectares, which makes the Pentagon one of the largest landowners world wide. By establishing (1) Air force Bases, (2) Army or Land Bases (3) Naval Bases and (4) Communications and Spy Bases and deploying more than Million Army Personnel throughout the world the US has converted the entire world a battle ground.

Encirclement of Russia and China is on the top priority of US and NATO. The erstwhile colonial European countries who fought against each other during the first and Second World Wars have become united now formed the European union and became subservient to US hegemony. Both US and NATO have established Military Bases in most of the Countries. According to Rick Rozoff, "The advanced Patriot Theatre anti-ballistic missile batteries in place or soon to be in Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Germany, Greece, Japan, Kuwait, The Netherlands, Poland, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Taiwan, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates make an arc stretching from the Black Sea through Southeast Europe to the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, the Caucasus, the Persian gulf and beyond the East Asia. A Semicircle that begins on Russia's northwest and ends on China's North East."

The Military Bases are being used for transit of troops, weapons and controlling natural resources. Often the Countries where these Bases are located are also drawn into the war by US & NATO. These countries are becoming dumping grounds for US Weapons. US Bases in Turkey, Germany, Diego Garcia, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States have been used by US for invasion and destruction of Iraq.

Military Bases are also used to for storage facilities for weapons including Nuclear Weapons, for test ranges including Nuclear Weapons, training of US soldiers, intelligence operations and monitor emails, phone and to collect data, communications traffic and for torture, imprisonment and extra judicial functions. Where ever these Bases exist they create innumerable problems the civilian population of that area. Often high level incidence of Rapes committed by the foreign soldiers, accidents by Military Vehicles, violent crimes, pollution and health hazards due to frequent testing of weapons. The foreign soldiers who commit crimes cannot be held responsible and tried because they are covered by immunity.

In South Korea there are nearly 100 Military Bases. In 2002 two teenage

girls on their way to a birth day party were run over by US Military tank. The Driver and the other Soldiers on the tank were not allowed to be tried in Korea. They were repatriated to US and a Military court in US declared that them not guilty.

In 2006 more than 2600 car accidents have taken place in Korea involving servicemen. Korean victims were left without the means to claim damages. Korean insurance companies refused to cover the damages, arguing that the claims ought to be paid by those who have committed the crime. But the guilty parties enjoy legal immunity and escape any punishment. By and large this is the situation in all countries where US Military bases are located.

US is not facing any threat from an country and on the other hand it attacks countries creating false pretexts. Earlier it was the bogey of communism. After the disintegration of USSR, now it is global terrorism. Even terrorism is not there it would have invented something else like weapons of mass destruction in Iraq etc. The hidden agenda is building of an Empire, exercising hegemony and corporate domination.

According to Irkalis Tsavardis, executive Secretary of the World Peace Council(WPC) "The establishment of U.S military bases should not of course be seen simply in terms of direct military ends. They are always used to promote the economic and political objectives of capitalism. For example U.S Corporations and the U.S Government have been eager for some time to build gas pipelines from the Caspian Sea in the central Asia through Afghanistan and Pakistan to the Arabian Sea. This region has more than 6 percent of the world's proven oil reserves and almost 40 percent of its gas reserves. The War in Afghanistan and the creation of U.S. Military Bases in Central Asia are viewed as a Key opportunity to make such pipelines a reality". In this light the ongoing construction of a Naval Base at Jeju Island in South Korea to be used by the U.S Navy is to cut the shipping lines of ships which carry oil to China from Middle East. Majority of the US people don't support the policies of the US Governments. This is evident in the Agitation of 1% Vs 99%.

Resistance to U.S Military Bases is growing in several countries. Australia, Japan. South Korea, Ecuador, Paraguay, Uzbekistan, Bulgaria, Philippines, Puerto Rico, Spain, Italy, Guam, Mauritius are worth mentioning. The No Bases Network is playing a significant role in building up World public opinion against the Military Bases. The movement against U.S Military Bases in Okinawa in Japan and the heroic struggle of the people of Jeju Island and dismantling of the Guantanamo Base in Cuba are gaining world wide support. It is reported that Iraq has refused to allow the U.S to keep Military Bases there. Ecuador's President Rafael Correa has given a notice to US for the removal of US Military Bases from Ecuador. The people of Okinawa in Japan

have created history by electing an Anti US Military Base candidate Takeshi Onaga as the Governor of Okinawa and Susumu Inamine who has vowed to block construction of a US Military Base in his City of Nago as Mayor.

The Military Base on Diego Garcia was established due to a treacherous role by UK which illegally occupied it displacing Chagoossian people and leased it to US for 50 years to convert it as a Military Base. This Base was used when US attacked Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan. The people of Mauritius are relentlessly struggling against UK and US for vacating Diego Garcia

The atrocities, inhuman tortures by US in the Guantanamo Bay Naval Bases in CUBA are the worst of type of violation of human rights. The detainees are brought from various countries, Afghanistan, , Africa, South Asia. Amnesty International demanded closure of this Base stating that “ a prime example of the USA’s double standard on human rights”. Ms. Navi Pillay, the UN Human Rights Chief demanded on 23 January 2012 closer of this Base stating that indefinite imprisonment of detainees without charge or trial violates international law.

Establishing Military Bases in foreign countries is the legacy of colonialism and imperialism to occupy and dominate other countries. Unfortunately the U.N Charter doesn’t deal exclusively this issue, perhaps due to the fact that when the Charter was being drafted in 1945 the issue of Military Bases was not prominent. But by the time the United Nations Millennium Declaration was drafted in 2000 the problem of Military Bases achieved dangerous proportions. Even then this issue has been ignored. In the Chapter III of the Millennium Declaration while discussion about Peace, Security and disarmament the issue of Abolition or closing of foreign Military bases should have figured. Disarmament and Abolition of Military Bases are complimentary to each other. But this issue never was part of the disarmament campaign globally

2nd Declaration of Grande-Rivière on Diego Garcia/Chagos

The Second Conference on Diego Garcia and Chagos held at Grande Rivière and bringing together 160 participants on 1& 2 October 2016,

- noting with satisfaction that the Mauritian State has at long last put a Resolution on the agenda at the UN General Assembly to take the issue of sovereignty to the International Court of Justice,

- and noting with satisfaction that the Mauritian State has included a representative of the Chagossians in its official delegation

- and warning that the coming 6 months represent both opportunities and dangers for Mauritius because the illegal lease between the UK and USA expires in December, and because the next 6 months during which the debate-and-vote on Mauritius' UN General Assembly Resolution is on "hold" leaves opportunities for occult pressures to be applied on the Mauritian State by the UK and USA,

reached consensus that we confirm the conviction expressed in the *First Declaration of Grande Rivière* of 2010 that we share the combined aim of:

- “- the complete decolonization of the Republic of Mauritius, the dismantling of the British Indian Ocean Territories colony, and the re-unification of the country,

- “- the closing down of the US military base on Diego Garcia, and its ecological clean-up by the US,

- “- the right of return and full reparations for all Chagossians,”

And we refined our previous definition of “right of return” to include freedom of movement within the Republic of Mauritius for all citizens;

And, with the purpose of furthering this triple-aim, noting that, since our call in the *First Declaration*, for the Mauritian State:

- *“To enter a case in the International Court of Justice at The Hague through at once inscribing a Resolution to this precise effect on to the agenda of the next UN General Assembly due in 2011”*, this has come about; however, our *mise-en-garde* in the *First Declaration* to *“ensur[e] that it is not later withdrawn from the agenda,”* is still relevant today;

- *“To use all other UN bodies and procedures for actions that involve a clear statement of Mauritian sovereignty on Chagos, and a clear indication of the danger the military base represents”*, the Mauritian State did take Great Britain to the Tribunal under the UN Convention on the Sea and won its case, thus making the *British Marine Protected Area* illegal and compelling Britain not to act on Chagos without consultations with Mauritius, and in addition obtained a minority judgment in favour of Mauritius’ sovereignty;

- *“To organize a formal State visit on the Trochetia to Chagos (including Diego Garcia), a part of Mauritian territory as defined by the Constitution, for a delegation including the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, and the Leader of the Opposition”*, while not having been put into action yet, has gained the support of the Leader of the Opposition for the first time;

- *“To make a formal demand for UN inspections under the Pelindaba Treaty, as soon as the administrative mechanism for doing so comes into force”*, Mauritius has been elected to the Commission but has not yet, to our knowledge, acted for inspections;

And noting

- that the National Assembly has recently passed a domestic law outlawing cluster munitions on all Mauritian territory, including Diego Garcia;

- that even before the end of the past colonization of Mauritius, a new form of colonization has begun, whereby gated communities are being set up and land sold off to millionaires in exchange for residence and citizenship, and that this is a possible danger for Chagos in the future;

- the importance of *“The Land Question”*, that is to say the importance of democratically deciding how to use Mauritian land, including Chagos, in order to create jobs and amenities for the people of the country;

- coming electoral reforms and constitutional amendments

- that we continue to face the danger of imperialist and private capitalist interests setting their sites on different islands and territories of Mauritius, including Chagos;

- the importance of preserving and transmitting knowledge of past history;

- the on-going danger of foreign military bases;

- the importance of mobilizing the Mauritian people in the movement to decolonize and demilitarize Mauritius;

- the importance of finding practical ways to oppose creeping militarization by the USA;

- the importance of building international support of peoples, as well as of States, for the movement to decolonize and demilitarize Mauritius;

We re-iterate our mise-en-garde that Government does not withdraw the Resolution from the UN Agenda, and we call on the Mauritian Government to activate the UN Resolution which is on “hold” when the time comes, and to go ahead with the ICJ case for an Advisory Opinion;

We now call on the Mauritian State to act so as to implement the UNCLOS Tribunal judgment, including preventing the UK acting unilaterally on Chagos;

We re-iterate our call for a formal State visit to Chagos including Diego Garcia and we call for a delegation of Chagossians to be invited on board;

We re-iterate our demand for the Mauritian State to call for inspections under the Pelindaba Treaty; and we also commit ourselves to sending, in the name of the Conference, a request to the executive Secretary of AFCONE, Dr. Mohamed Derdour, for an investigation on Diego Garcia;

We also now add a call for the Mauritian State to seek UN inspections under the Convention on Cluster Munitions;

And we call for Government to set up a Chagos Island Council and a Constituency of Chagos;

And we re-iterate our call to amend the Constitution so as to outlaw the setting up of any foreign military bases on Mauritian territory in future;

And we now call for vigilance in the face of new forms of colonization through the selling off of land to millionaires from abroad in gated communities;

We re-iterate our pledge to support research that gathers testimony about Chagos, collects all the documentation on Chagos, so that the history and culture of Chagos are kept alive; we add to this our pledge to explore the possibility of a book based on the photographs by Vel Kadarasen forming the Exhibition that took place during the Conference;

We re-iterate our call on Sir Aneerood Jugnauth who was then President and who is now Prime Minister, the last living participant in pre-Independence negotiations held at Lancaster House, to come forward to give public testimony; and we go further this time, by calling on the Mauritian Government to launch a massive media campaign, and an educational

campaign in all schools, to popularize knowledge about not only the continued colonization of Chagos, the military occupation of Diego Garcia and the suffering that the military base has caused the Chagossians, but also about the recent events, including the UNCLOS judgement, the UK-US joint communiqué, the pressures and delaying tactics of the UK and USA;

We call on our Government to halt the supply of bargeloads of rocks and other aggregates to Diego Garcia, following testimony given at a Conference workshop;

We pledge to encourage peoples world-wide, including the people of Mauritius, to put pressure on respective Governments to decrease all SOFAs (Status of the armed Forces Agreements) that the USA is always augmenting; and we encourage all NGOs, students, unions, journalists and media to be vigilant to the dangers of accepting money and scholarships from the US Embassy so long as military occupation of the Republic of Mauritius continues,

And that in order to advance the three causes we stated in the first paragraph, as well as the specific demands we then enumerated above, we will further build up broad support on a national and international level;

And we delegate the undersigned to present this Declaration of Grande Rivière to the Prime Minister and also to make it public.

Alain Ah-Vee

Jean-Claude Bibi

Lindsey Collen

Ragini Kistnasamy

Cassam Uteem

October, 2016.

*At a crucial time for the struggle to end the illegal military occupation of Chagos,
to re-unify the country and win the right to return heads-held-high for all Chagossians*

2nd International Conference on Diego Garcia

by LALIT

THEME:

**“Diego Garcia: 50 Years’ Occupation
& Banishment,
50 Years’ Struggle: Let’s Win!”**