

LALIT Newsletter

CHAGOS

DIEGO GARCIA

NO.1....A lagazet Lalit de Klas Publication..... May 2018

Why this Newsletter on Diego Garcia now?

We are proposing to have a regular international Lalit Newsletter on Diego Garcia to bring together all aspects of the struggle to continue the decolonization of Africa and as regards the continued military occupation by the UK and USA of the Chagos Archipelago. Why now?

It is a key moment in the struggle.

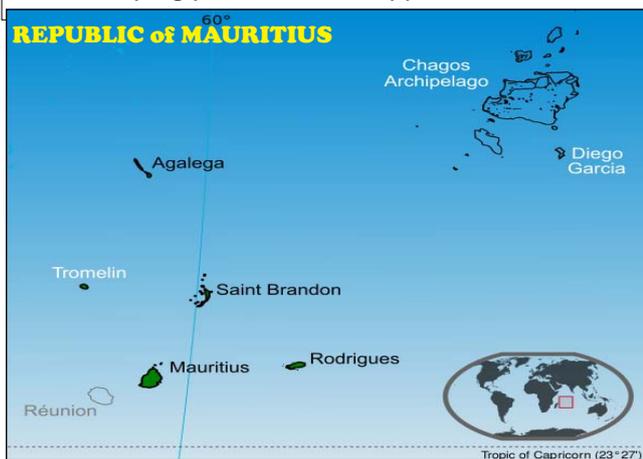
We are calling on you to contact your Government to call for support for the Mauritian case at the UN Court, the ICJ.

The Chagos issue has three interlinked elements that we consider to be inseparable: the sovereignty claim by the Republic of Mauritius, the necessity to dismantle the US military base on the island of Diego Garcia, together with both reparations to the Chagossians the right to return to the Archipelago. All these, in turn, depend on different kinds of mobilization. Lalit has been central to decades of struggle.

This Newsletter will represent a regular update of events and analyses relating to all three struggles.

After the historic vote at the U.N. General Assembly, coming after demonstrations, petitions, forums, hunger strikes, international conferences, open letters – and the vote 94-15 to refer the sovereignty issue to the UN International Court of Justice at the Hague, we need to both keep ourselves informed of the latest developments and plan future campaigns and actions.

The Newsletter aims at doing this, both amongst organizations and individuals who have already shown an interest in the Chagos struggle, as well as developing potential new support.



EDITORIAL

U.S. MILITARY BASE ON DIEGO GARCIA MUST BE CLOSED!

For 42 years now, LALIT has mobilized on the three closely intertwined demands on this issue:

- Decolonization of the Chagos Islands, illegally split off from Mauritius by Britain at Independence in 1968
- Closure of the US military base on one of the islands, Diego Garcia.
- The right of return, heads held high, of all Chagossians, as Mauritians, with proper reparations.

Our mass mobilizations of the 1970s and 1980s have helped keep the struggle against military occupation on the agenda until now. Lalit never gave up on any of the three. Why should we?

And finally, on 22 June, 2017, the Mauritian State, under the decades of pressure, took the issue of de-colonization to the UN. There it won a resolution 94-15 – on the basis of an argument developed over decades by LALIT – “for the de-colonization of Africa”. In fact, it was the African Union that presented the Resolution.

The Chagos Refugees Group was part of the Government delegation to the UN, finally uniting the right to return struggle with the de-colonization struggle. This process of integrating the struggles ought to have been initiated by previous Governments from the very day of Independence in 1968– including Labour, MMM, PMSD and MSM Governments.

LALIT has, over the years, constantly worked with both the CRG, as well as the Chagossian Social Group, in all our struggles, with the relationship often being conflictual. The conflict has been, in every case, over the importance LALIT gives constantly to the unity of the three struggles. Close personal ties born of hunger strikes, demonstrations, arrests and trials, have linked LALIT women militants with Chagossian women very closely. The August 79 strike bound us closely to Chagossians in the sectors concerned. Some Chagossians have also, over the years, been active in LALIT branches, in adult education courses our members run, with our members in the women’s movement and the union movement. We have worked with the CRG in the Rann Nu Diego! committee, in the No Bases Conference in Mumbai, and with Chagossians at the grassroots in Komite Diego. The GRC and Chagossians participated in both our International Conferences in 2010 and 2016.

Anyway, finally there is to be an ICJ case on 3 September. One of the Cold War’s tightly kept secrets is finally exposed to the light of day.

But, getting or even “winning” an Advisory Opinion through a United Nations body, though important, is not in itself “the victory”. The process is part of changing the balance of forces against the colonizers, the

imperialists and the war-mongers.

And, in any case, we have, so far, only had Governments (Labour, PMSD, MMM, MSM) wildly in favour of maintaining the US military base – even if Chagos is returned to the Republic – and only too keen to collect rent. This, despite the logic Mentor Minister Sir Aneerood Jugnauth correctly employs, when he says that the purpose the British gave was to set up a “communications station”, and that nobody told them to “stick a base there”.

So, the present Prime Minister, Pravind Jugnauth, openly reassures the USA and UK that the base will remain.

Even after B-52’s took off from this Mauritian territory, for which we are responsible, as part of bombing Baghdad in what is now universally accepted to have been an illegal war, he says this?

Even after the lies, then admission, that torture and illegal renderings took place on Diego Garcia, Mauritian land, he says this?

Even after the whole of Africa and most of Latin America and Asia’s leaders give him support on principle, he says this? He looks for rent money?

LALIT is mobilizing today for support for base closure – Diego Garcia and all military bases abroad. We are mobilizing support for an end of the arms industry. We are mobilizing support to dismantle all nuclear arms,

without turning a blind eye to US nuclear weapons, or worse still, to totally illegal Israeli, nuclear weapons. We need to prevent war on the earth, under the earth, on the sea, under the sea, in the air, and in space. And LALIT is mobilizing against capitalism, the system that creates the need for war and destruction in its greed for markets, for raw materials, for money money money as profits.

Our program does not demand too much – we just want democratic control of planet earth and outer space. That’s all.

Link to letter to Pravind Jugnauth:

<http://www.lalitmauritius.org/en/newsarticle/2044/open-letter-of-protest-to-pravind-jugnauth-re-his-betrayal-of-peoples-principled-support-on-chagos-english-and-kreol-versions/>



Archive photo of seven of the eight women charged with illegal demonstration outside the court, 1981: Charlesia Alexis, Roselie Pakium, Lilette Goyaram, Lindsey Collen, Philinne Frivole, Ragini Kistnasamy, Marie Louise Armoogum.



LALIT member, Lindsey Collen resists arrest during demonstration to decolonise Chagos and close US base on Diego in 1981



LALIT member, Ragini Kistnasamy resists arrest in Diego-Chagos demonstration in 1981.



Chagossian woman, Charlesia Alexis, resisting arrest in Diego-Chagos demonstration in 1981



Demonstration against UK-US military occupation of Diego Garcia organised by LALIT in Port Louis, April 2010

Perhaps the finest sources on the issue of the Diego Garcia military base issue and on the epic struggle for Chagos’ decolonization can be found on our site:
www.lalitmauritius.org

First UN General Assembly Vote on Chagos 22 June 2017

MAURITIUS AND AFRICA WIN 94-15 AGAINST UK AND USA

The vote in the UNGA is an historic one in the decolonisation struggle. In LALIT, we do not think that the UN system will “win” the struggle. However, it is vital to put on the agenda the fact that there is territory that we, the people of Mauritius are supposed to control which is outside of all democratic control, and being put to military use and abuse.

The UN vote of last year shows the world that crimes committed by colonial powers and their allies 50 years ago will not go unpunished. They are accountable to the world and at some point in history they will have to pay for their crimes. This is a signal in the right direction to existing and future rogue states and rogue leaders. When the African Union proposed the Resolution to the UN General Assembly, it demolished UK and US arguments claiming that the Chagos issue is a “bilateral dispute”. Contavening UN Charter and UN resolution calling on UK as the colonial administering of Mauritius not to dismember Mauritius cannot be a bilateral issue.

See how different States (including your country) voted:

Voting

Yes: 94, No: 15, Abstentions: 65, Non-Voting: 19,

Total voting membership: 193

YES: 94

Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State Of), Botswana, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Cote D’ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People’s Republic Of Korea, Democratic Republic Of The Congo, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, India, Jordan, Kenya, Kiribati, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Republic of Moldova, Rwanda, Sao Tome And Principe, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam,

Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

No: 15

Afghanistan, Albania, Australia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Israel, Japan, Lithuania, Maldives, Montenegro, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, United Kingdom, United States

Abstentions: 65

Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Bahrain, Barbados, Belgium, Bosnia And Herzegovina, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Iceland, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States Of), Mongolia, Myanmar, Netherlands, Norway, Oman, Palau, Panama, Paraguay, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts And Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent And The Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Turkey, Tuvalu

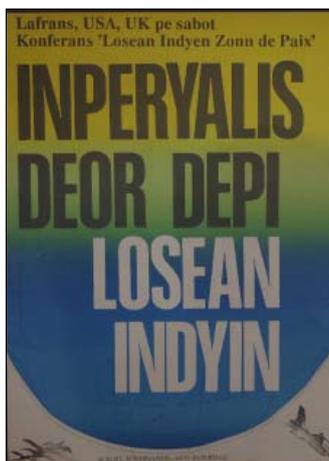
Non-Voting: 19

Antigua And Barbuda, Cambodia, Dominica, Georgia, Haiti, Honduras, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Libya, Monaco, Morocco, Senegal, Somalia, Surinam, Tajikistan, Tonga, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan

See Links to 2 articles in the News Section of LALIT website on the United Nations General Assembly vote:

<http://www.lalitmauritius.org/en/newsarticle/1976/victory-on-chagosdiego-garcia-issue-at-un-general-assembly-who-won-it/>

<http://www.lalitmauritius.org/en/newsarticle/1977/victory-of-un-general-assembly-vote-on-chagos-and-diego-garcia-david-and-goliath/>



POSTERS FROM LALIT ACTIVIST ARCHIVES

(From left to right)

1. Against France, USA, UK Imperialist presence in the Indian Ocean
2. LALIT demanding Mauritian government to put a case against UK at the ICJ
3. Free Diego poster

VOTE BREAKDOWN OF THE 53 COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES ON THE DECOLONIZATION RESOLUTION AT THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON 22ND JUNE 2017

Commonwealth is an organization of 53 member states that are mostly former British colonies. The head of the Commonwealth is the Queen of England and in April 2018, she has handed the title to her heir to the throne, Prince Charles. Sixteen member countries still have the Queen as their head of state whereas remaining thirty-seven countries recognized the Queen as only “the symbol of the free association” of Commonwealth members. UK has failed to its stated mission “To help create and sustain a Commonwealth that is mutually respectful, resilient, peaceful and prosperous and that cherishes equality, diversity and shared values.” And for more than fifty years, UK governments and its Queen have acted to the contrary. UK has blatantly undermined UN resolutions on the Chagos, Queen Orders in Council behind elected UK governments to continue its colonization on Chagos, has changed the Commonwealth Rules so that Mauritius cannot go to the UN to get ICJ ruling which is binding on UK and Mauritius, re-conduct an illegal lease to the USA for its base on Diego Garcia when it has asked UN for a delay of 6 months to negotiate with Mauritius.

There is no member country in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Americas voted against the resolution on Decolonisation of the Chagos. Only Australia and New Zealand have voted in support of UK.

A unanimous vote in favour for Africa, nineteen votes in favour out of the nineteen African countries that are members of the Commonwealth.

Four out of seven Asian member countries voted in favour whereas three abstained.

Four out of thirteen member countries voted in favour, seven abstained and two did not take part in the vote.

Europe three votes were split with one vote in favour, one against and one abstention. Cyprus is a member of European Union and was a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement and a member until 2004 when it joined the European Union.

On eleven Pacific member countries, five voted in favour, three abstained, two voted against and one did not vote

Voting

Yes: 33, No: 3, Abstention: 14

Not Voted: 3,

Total voting membership: 53

Africa

YES: Botswana, Cameroon, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Swazi-

land, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia

Asia

YES: Bangladesh, India, Malaysia and Pakistan

Abstain: Brunei, Singapore and Sri Lanka

Caribbean and the Americas

YES: Bahamas, Belize, Guyana and Trinidad & Tobago.

Abstain: Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Kitts & Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent & The Grenadines.

Not Voted: Antigua & Barbuda and Dominica.

Europe

YES: Cyprus

NO: United Kingdom

Abstain: Malta

Pacific

YES: Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu

Abstain: Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu

NO: Australia and New Zealand



Roselie Pakium, Chagossian woman being arrested by police during Diego-Chagos demonstration in 1981

Written State Support at the ICJ

Up to now in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) Chagos decolonization case, there have been 33 State submissions to support Chagos decolonization, including that of Mauritius, Seychelles, India, Argentina and the African Union. The deadline for submissions is the 15th May, 2018. Apart from State submissions, there has also been a submission by the UK All Party Parliamentary Group on Chagos in favour of the ICJ taking on this case, going against the UK State stand. ICJ hearings are expected as from September this year, and an advisory opinion expected by April 2019. The ICJ’s advisory opinion is of course, not binding, but would reinforce, as part of a set of other initiatives, the struggle to decolonize and demilitarize the Chagos. (See our 2016 Conference Declaration: <http://www.lalitmauritius.org/en/newsarticle/1861/diego-garciachagos-declaration-of-grande-rivire-on-chagos/>)

Diego Garcia Base, Chagos Occupation:
A Collective and International Struggle

LALIT'S 2ND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE:
"AGAINST OCCUPATION
AND BANISHMENT"

LALIT has held two international action conferences on Diego Garcia in the past 8 years. The theme of the most recent International Action Conference, October 2016, was "Diego Garcia: 50 Years' Occupation and Banishment, 50 Years' Struggle: Let's Win!"

Our Local guest speakers were former President of the Republic Cassam Uteem, former Attorney General Jean Claude Bibi, and Chagossians Leader, Olivier Bancout. Lalit members also spoke against the UK and US military occupation of the Chagos

Our International guest speakers were Jammu Narayana Rao, Wilbert van der Zeijden, Noel Stott – Skype call, Joseph Gerson-Skype call, Clare Bayard, David Vine, Maricela Guzman

Here is the link for Lalit's e-book with Conference report, Conference Declaration and most speeches:
<http://www.lalitmauritius.org/lalit-2nd-international-conference-declaration-on-chagos-and-speeches>

LALIT's 1st International Action Conference on Diego Garcia

The theme for LALIT's 1st International Conference on Diego Garcia in 2010 was "Action to close the military base on Diego Garcia & to end the illegal UK - USA occupation of Chagos & for the right to return & full reparations for Chagossians.

Our International Guest Speakers and links for their speeches are as follows:

Wilbert van der Zeijden

<http://www.lalitmauritius.org/en/newsarticle/1116/wilbert-van-der-zeijden-of-no-bases-speaks-on-closing-down-bases/>

The late John Percy

<http://www.lalitmauritius.org/john-percy-on-us-imperialism-today>

Penny Duggan

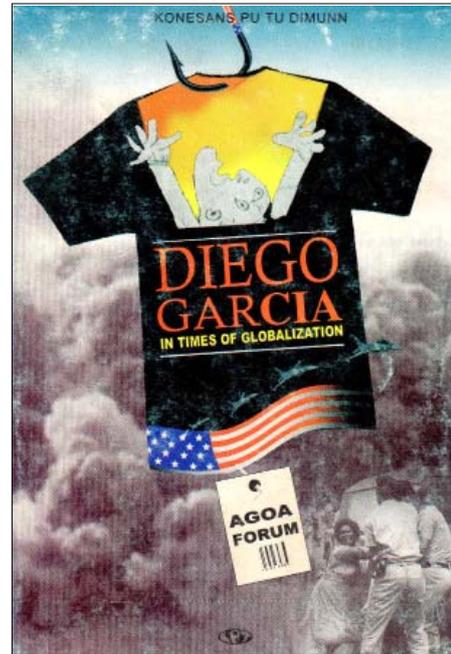
<http://www.lalitmauritius.org/penny-duggan-on-the-crisis-of-civilisation-and-resistance-france>

Link for 1st International Conference Declaration:

<http://www.lalitmauritius.org/en/newsarticle/1088/declaration-of-grande-riviere-on-chagos/>



Participants at the LALIT 2nd International Conference, 2016



LALIT'S 200-PAGE BOOK ON DIEGO GARCIA STRUGGLE

In 2004, LALIT published a book of essays on all aspects of the Chagossian struggle and the struggle to demilitarize Diego Garcia until then. It included the following chapters:

- U.S Hegemony and Unilateralism
- How Diego Garcia was Depopulated & Stolen
- AGOA – an instrument of the US ruling class
- Indian Ocean: Peace or War Zone
- The Struggle of Ordinary People
- Government and Bourgeoisie's Positions
- Chagossians' Situation Today
- What exactly is "Mauritius"?
- What it's like on Diego Garcia under Occupation
- False Assertions re "Impossibility" of Getting the
- Diego Garcia Base Closed
- How the British Sins were Hidden
- Brief account of Judgment in case v. US and DCDM
- Sabotage of the Kyoto Protocol
- The Deal between the US and UK
- Outline of the US Damages Case
- Outline of Constitutional and International History
- Brief Chronology
- Letter to Tony Blair
- The Rann Nu Diego Committee
- The AGOA and Diego
- Ram Seegobin exposes the dangers of AGOA conditionalities
- The 2002 Resolution on Diego Garcia initiated by the Sahrington Strategy Workshop
- The Island of Diego Garcia, B-52's and you and me.

Link for Whole Book:

<http://www.lalitmauritius.org/lalit-book-diego-garcia-in-times-of-globalisation>

Note: If any link fails, cut-and-paste it. That works.

HISTORY OF LALIT'S ATTEMPTS TO GO TO CHAGOS IN A BOAT

LALIT's action to get a boat to go to Diego Garcia is the kind of initiative that binds together the three interlinked demands on the Chagos issue: namely to close the US military nuclear base on Diego Garcia, to re-unify the Republic of Mauritius and for the right of return for Chagossians. There have been three key moments in this ongoing campaign to get a boat.

Greenpeace

In October 1998, Lalit member Lindsey Collen met with Greenpeace in Amsterdam and the organization agreed to arrange for a boat, the Arctic Sunrise, to take members of the Rann nu Diego committee, a common front regrouping LALIT and the Chagos Refugees Group, to the Chagos. The expedition only got annulled because the Arctic Sunrise got iced in during an Antarctic mission.

No Bases: Peace Flotilla

After 2000 when the Chagossians had initially won the right to return through the British Courts, LALIT and the Chagos Refugees Group seized the chance to get a boat – through the NO BASES network and with former Greenpeace sailors. We met at the World Social Forum in Mumbai in 2004, and succeeded in getting the Japanese Peace Boat for the trip to Diego. The idea for a ship to go to Diego became the "Peace flotilla" with some 10 ships offering to join in this trip to take the Chagossians home. In Mumbai, it was firmly put on the No Bases and Anti war Movement agendas, got popularised and got worldwide support. This provoked two reactions from the British State. First, Britain passed new decrees, notorious Queen's Orders-in-Council, to banish the Chagossians again; second, in 2006 Britain affreighted a ship, itself, to take Chagossians on a symbolic visit. This perfidious British manoeuvre, acted as a double-edged knife to cut out the LALIT-CRG plan! Call on Mauritian State to Charter a Ship

In 2016 when the Mauritian State finally decided to put a case against the UK at the ICJ, LALIT took up the boat campaign again. The Diego Committee regrouping a trade union confederation (CTSP), the women's movement (MLF), a neighbourhood association (MPRB), LALIT and individuals petitioned the Government of Mauritius to take the initiative to affreight a ship, and to prepare an official delegation, with Government and Opposition representatives and the President, together with Chagossian representatives, journalists from Mauritius and from abroad to go the Chagos. All the political parties in Parliament supported this boat idea.

This boat initiative in protest against the Diego Garcia US military base, its nuclearisation, the forcible removals of Chagossians and the continued colonisa-

tion of part of Mauritius has got massive support. Over 100 organisations world-wide have shown support, to LALIT, for the initiative of a ship or flotilla to take the Chagossians back home. They range from huge organisations like the CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) in the UK, anti base organisations in Porto Rico, Philippines, Japan, Okinawa, South Korea, War veterans organisations in the USA, Peace committees within the Quaker religion, to anti war movements in South Africa and Holland.

In 2017, LALIT petitioned the government to prepare for a State visit to Chagos and to provisionally charter a ship in preparation for a positive ICJ judgment. This State visit to Chagos as part of the Republic of Mauritius could include the Prime Minister, other representatives of Government, Chagossian Refugee Group representatives, Opposition Party Leaders, as well as the local and international press.



The Greenpeace ship, Arctic Sunrise that nearly took us all to Chagos



Demonstration in front of British High Commission in Port Louis organised by LALIT, 2010

