# Mauritius prioritises debt repayment over Chagossian resettlement in UK deal



Mauritius is now facing intense scrutiny following revelations that it plans to use funds transferred from the UK government to settle its national debts rather than prioritising the resettlement of the indigenous Chagossian population. This situation has reignited significant anger over the recent agreement signed under the leadership of Sir Keir Starmer, which will see the UK cede sovereignty of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius while retaining a military base on Diego Garcia through a long-term lease.

The controversial £101 million per year deal, which aims to address historical injustices by facilitating a return of the Chagossians, has raised eyebrows after the budget proposal for 2025/26 was disclosed. This documentation indicates that Mauritius intends to allocate any revenue generated from the Chagos deal towards debt repayment for the initial three years of the agreement. Only thereafter, in year four, will the establishment of a purported £40 million ‘Future Fund’ commence, underscoring concerns that the needs of the displaced Chagossians are being subordinated to fiscal imperatives.

Campaigners representing the Chagossian community have expressed their fury at this allocation of funds. Jean Francois-Nellan from Chagossian Voices articulated his dismay, stating that the Mauritian government seems focused on balancing its finances rather than addressing the long-standing injustices faced by the Chagossians, who were forcibly removed from their home islands between 1965 and 1973. Despite Mauritius’ assertive declaration of sovereignty over the Chagos archipelago, its budget proposal conspicuously omits any reference to the resettlement of the very people whose displacement sparked international legal challenges against the UK’s actions.

This discontent has not gone unnoticed on a global scale. Chagossian campaigners have submitted a formal communication to the United Nations Human Rights Committee, aiming to contest the legitimacy of the UK-Mauritius deal. This effort highlights not only the absence of Chagossian representation in the negotiations but also the committee's potential to issue rulings with significant moral authority that could challenge the validity of the treaty.

Moreover, the sentiment among the Chagossians is compounded by the broader geopolitical implications of the deal, as it has been framed within the context of international military strategy and power dynamics in the Indian Ocean. Observers note the historical context of the Chagos Islands—separated from Mauritius in 1965 to facilitate the establishment of the Diego Garcia base, crucial during various military operations including those in Afghanistan and Iraq. This complicated legacy continues to shape discussions of sovereignty, justice, and the rights of the displaced, with many traditional allies of the UK, including the US and India, openly supportive of the agreement, albeit amidst concerns over its implications for regional stability.

The Chagossians’ demand for a right to return remains fraught with obstacles, particularly after the agreement explicitly bars their return to Diego Garcia, an issue that campaigners like Bernadette Dugasse and Bertrice Pompe are determined to continue fighting. They argue that the agreement further entrenches a colonial legacy that has long sought to marginalise their existence. Pompe expressed her views bluntly, advocating for justice and lamenting the UK government’s efforts to justify this arrangement as a betrayal of the Chagossians.

In light of these developments, the potential for international oversight via the UN Human Rights Committee’s eventual ruling may serve as a pivotal moment in this ongoing struggle, with many hoping it could reinvigorate discussions around the fairness of the deal and the rights of those displaced. Despite frustrations, campaigners remain steadfast in their opposition to the agreement, signalling that this fight is far from over.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/chagos-deal-mauritius-starmer-b2764642.html), [[2]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/chagos-deal-mauritius-starmer-b2764642.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/chagos-deal-mauritius-starmer-b2764642.html), [[2]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/chagos-deal-mauritius-starmer-b2764642.html), [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/2f6032c4-4c53-4b7c-97bc-46a93a3c0bd5)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/world/mauritius-pm-queries-duration-lease-deal-chagos-military-base-2025-01-18/), [[5]](https://apnews.com/article/c8a4911f76e1ce2be4d4fdbcaa23786a), [[6]](https://theweek.com/politics/the-chagos-agreement-explained)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://theweek.com/politics/the-chagos-agreement-explained), [[7]](https://elpais.com/internacional/2025-05-22/el-reino-unido-pone-fin-a-una-disputa-de-medio-siglo-al-entregar-a-mauricio-el-archipielago-de-chagos.html)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/chagos-deal-mauritius-starmer-b2764642.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/chagos-deal-mauritius-starmer-b2764642.html> - The Independent reports that Mauritius is using UK government funds to pay off its debts instead of resettling indigenous Chagossians. This revelation follows Chagossian campaigners submitting a formal legal communication to the United Nations Human Rights Committee to challenge the legitimacy of the UK-Mauritius deal. The agreement, signed last month, involves the UK ceding sovereignty of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius while leasing back the US-UK military base on Diego Garcia for £101 million per year over 99 years. Under the deal, a £40 million 'Future Fund' trust was established by the UK to help resettle indigenous Chagossians and create wealth for future generations. However, the Mauritian budget for 2025/26 indicates that the revenue from the Chagos deal will be used for debt repayment for the first three years, with the Future Fund being established in year four. This has raised concerns among Chagossian campaigners about the prioritisation of debt repayment over resettlement efforts.
3. <https://www.reuters.com/world/mauritius-pm-queries-duration-lease-deal-chagos-military-base-2025-01-18/> - Reuters reports that Mauritius Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam has raised concerns about the duration and terms of a lease on a U.S.-British military base on Diego Garcia, part of the Chagos Islands. The UK agreed in October to cede the Chagos Islands to Mauritius while retaining control of the base under a 99-year lease, pending ratification. Ramgoolam criticised this agreement, calling it a 'sell out' and suggesting the lease should account for inflation and exchange rates. He emphasised the importance of recognising Mauritius' sovereignty over the islands, which may impact the UK's ability to unilaterally renew the lease. Ramgoolam also highlighted U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken's urgency to finalise the agreement before Donald Trump's inauguration and addressed concerns raised by Marco Rubio, Trump's Secretary of State pick, regarding potential security threats. Additionally, some Chagossians have opposed the deal as they were not included in the negotiations and plan to protest.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/2f6032c4-4c53-4b7c-97bc-46a93a3c0bd5> - The Financial Times discusses the UK's Labour government facing backlash over its plan to transfer sovereignty of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius, following international pressure and a UN advisory ruling. Critics warn this move could jeopardise the UK-US military base on Diego Garcia, potentially facilitating Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean. A delay in finalising the deal aims to secure approval from the UK's key allies and fix some issues. Historically, the Chagos Islands' inhabitants were forcibly displaced in the 1960s without proper compensation. Mauritius has challenged the UK's sovereignty over the islands since its independence, leading to the recent agreement to grant Mauritius sovereignty while allowing Chagossians the right of return. Nonetheless, concerns persist over Mauritius potentially terminating the Diego Garcia lease in favour of China. The Labour government likely rushed the deal before the potential US administration change, with a new pause providing an opportunity to address critical lease and consultation issues.
5. <https://apnews.com/article/c8a4911f76e1ce2be4d4fdbcaa23786a> - The Associated Press reports that two women from the Chagos Islands are seeking to take the UK government to court over a proposed agreement to transfer sovereignty of the archipelago to Mauritius. Their lawyers argue that it was illegal to exclude the Chagossians from deciding the future of the archipelago, which is home to a strategic naval and air base for the UK and the US. The UK government announced in October its intention to transfer the islands to Mauritius, maintaining control of Diego Garcia, the largest island and site of the base. However, negotiations are on hold pending an agreement with US President Donald Trump's administration. The deal includes the creation of a resettlement fund for displaced islanders, though details are uncertain. The International Court of Justice had previously ruled that the UK acted illegally in dividing Mauritius in 1965 before its independence.
6. <https://theweek.com/politics/the-chagos-agreement-explained> - The Week provides an overview of the Chagos Agreement, a controversial deal through which Britain will transfer sovereignty of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius while securing a long-term lease on Diego Garcia for continued US-UK military use. The Chagos archipelago, ceded to Britain by France in 1814, was separated from Mauritius in 1965 and leased to the US, leading to the forced removal of over 2,000 Chagossians. Mauritius has long contested Britain's control, with UN rulings and General Assembly votes supporting its claim. The deal, reportedly worth £90 million annually for 99 years, aims to rectify colonial injustices and maintain strategic military assets. However, it has sparked political backlash in the UK due to its high cost and perceived betrayal of British Chagossians, many of whom oppose Mauritian governance due to historical mistreatment. Strategic concerns also arose in the US, where some Republicans, including Trump officials, feared the deal could favour China due to Mauritius's ties with Beijing. Despite these concerns, the deal has been endorsed by allies like the US and India. Yet, uncertainty surrounds the Chagossians' right to return, highlighting ongoing ethical and logistical challenges in the process of decolonisation and geopolitical negotiations.
7. <https://elpais.com/internacional/2025-05-22/el-reino-unido-pone-fin-a-una-disputa-de-medio-siglo-al-entregar-a-mauricio-el-archipielago-de-chagos.html> - El País reports that the United Kingdom has signed a historic agreement to return sovereignty of the Chagos archipelago to Mauritius, ending a dispute of more than half a century. In exchange, the UK and the US will retain control of the strategic military base on Diego Garcia for 99 years through a lease valued at over €4 billion. This base has been crucial militarily, especially during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and remains important for international security. The decision, although supported by allies like Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, has generated internal criticism in the UK, both for the high cost and social concerns. Additionally, there was legal resistance from some Chagossians, such as Bertrice Pompe, who oppose losing their British connection. Historically, Chagossians were expelled by the UK in 1966 to allow the installation of the US base. The UN General Assembly and the International Court of Justice had already urged in 2019 the return of the archipelago to Mauritius, declaring its retention illegal. Despite divisions within the Chagossian community, the transfer of sovereignty has been finalised.