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# Mauritian Overseas Gazette

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Views expressed by contributors are their own

## Chagos: The Eternal Debate

In *Le Mauricien* of 15 February 2019, I wrote an article under the headline "Chagos, the Eternal Debate". The question that may be asked six years later is "Is the debate regarding the Chagos really over?"

The country could be forgotten for the rejoicings that took place earlier this month following the announcement that Britain has last agreed to recognise the sovereignty of Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago. It can be said that the wrangling between Mauritius and Britain over the issue of sovereignty of the ancient British territory is over!

Many Mauritian personalities were congratulating themselves for their contributions, directly or indirectly, over years in the culmination of the victory of Mauritians and the Chagossians. Articles appear in the local press praising compatriots who, through their own revelations, have in the past contributed, in the decolonisation process of Mauritius to rid Britain of its sovereignty imposition.

Has Britain really moved over to leave the room clear for Mauritius to step in?, and has the debate over the Chagos been put to rest with so much money, in terms of rent and compensation, coming our way? Many are thinking that the pavements of the streets of Mauritius will be lined with money, henceforth.

The question is again repeated: Is the debate about the Chagos really over? Or has it now been given a new lease of life? The debate will, henceforth, not necessarily be an international one but more likely to be something home-grown. In the tradition that every incoming government spends a lot of time of their new mandate to criticise the performance of the outgoing government to camouflage their own doubt, or even inability, to face the



**PM Navin Ramgoolam pointing the finger at his predecessor: He sold out the interests of Mauritius, he said**

task ahead, the present PM, Dr Navin Ramgoolam, on taking office six months ago, told the Mauritian nation that the former PM, leader of the MSM, Pravind Jugnauth, in his negotiations with Britain over the Chagos issue, had sold out the interests of Mauritius, which was now his responsibility to redress.

On the other hand, the MSM leader, Pravind Jugnauth, who had been in hibernation following his party's crushing defeat at the November last election together with his coalition partners, suddenly woke up after some six months of absolute silence. At a press conference on 28 May 2025 at the Sunset Trust building, the MSM HQ, he declared that according to his negotiations with Britain in October last, it was agreed that Mauritius would have total control over the Chagos, with the exception of Diego Garcia. He said that Mauritius would have the freedom of action as regards the other islets (64) making up the Archipelago.

The MSM leader argued that, as a result of Ramgoolam's deal, Mauritius will not have the right to even peg a nail anywhere on those islets without consultation and approval of both Britain and the US.



**Former PM Pravind Jugnauth saying that his successor in his new Chagos deal has sold out the interests of Mauritius**

### NOT OVER AS YET

No, Sir, the Chagos debate is not over as yet! It's a *'fer blanc'* attached the tail of the Ramgoolam's government which the PM will drag on. It will be highlighted as long as the MSM in opposition will fight his government.

It must be borne in mind that everything has not been said and done about the Chagos debate as far as the British are concerned. It is now that the agreement with Mauritius is being debated in the House of Commons. A lot will come out about the Diego rent payment and funds for the rehabilitation of the Chagossians in their home country. The parliamentary Opposition are saying that Britain afford any payment.

If there are 64 islets+ in the Archipelago, the question may be asked on which one will the islanders choose to settle in order that all the necessary facilities may be put in place, like appropriate drainage system for sewerage and flooding prevention, road network with pavements, hospitals, schools, administrative offices, etc, etc and etc. Surely such infrastructure arrangements cannot be provided on every islet that the returning Chagossians



**Chagossians, the new generation. In the UK the young Chagossians are saying that the PM, Sir Keir Starmer, has sold out the Chagos to Mauritius**

may choose to inhabit.

The forthcoming December ministerial delegation to the Chagos to confirm possession will have to stay on the ship for toilet facilities and all.

After some 60 years of exile, the authorities will be dealing with a different generation of Chagossians living in Mauritius, the Seychelles and the UK. Will those sophisticated descendants wish to go back to the Robinson Crusoe life style?

Yet, the descendants of Chagossians settled in the UK are accusing Mauritius of stealing the compensation money promised by the British government. This money is yet to be paid of course. According to the Minister of Justice, Gavin Glover, the first payment from the British will be forthcoming sometimes in May 2026, after the British Parliament's approval.

So, with the UK Chagossians protest against the Archipelago being given to Mauritius, it is likely that this issue also will keep the Chagos Debate alive in the future.

P.C.



## Lanzarote Nightmare

# Growing Hostility of Spaniards towards British Tourists

by Yvonne Goder-Persand (UK)



I travelled to Lanzarote with my mother to relax and enjoy the Canary Islands which are located in the Spanish archipelago off the coast of northwestern Africa.

The Canary Islands are part of Europe and a territory of Spain. They are a popular holiday spot for Brits. Before travelling, we heard of some activity of reducing tourism to the small island but we were unaware of the scale of the hostility directed at the UK tourists.

I travelled with my mum, Efi Goder born in London to Greek Cypriot parents. Many locals addressed my mum as 'Senora', meaning 'Mrs'. As she is of dark Mediterranean complexion, things turned hostile once we spoke English.



travelled. We came across large signs stating 'Tourists Go Home', 'Tourists are not Welcome', and a dangerous provocation of 'Kill a Tourist'.

Apparently, an estimated number of 18 million tourists visit the Canary Islands annually. These islands have a population of only around 2 million. Spain being the most popular holiday destination for the British, UK tourists make up about 50% of the country's tourism industry.



Yvonne enjoying sun and sand

We are all aware, in the UK, of second home owned by lots of Brits. This causes considerable frustration and friction amongst the local people. They wish the authorities to impose a visitor's fee of up to 70 euros per person for 14 nights stay.

The Canary Islanders are distressed by the increased fees in rented accommodation, mak-



ing it unaffordable for the locals. However, 40% of the country's revenue does come from tourism.

I am sensitive to this large scale exploitation of tourism but I am also disappointed in the hostility from the Spanish people towards the Brits. I was made aware they purposely avoid speaking English. People have a respect for languages, but I can understand that Spaniards prefer to speak Spanish. On the other hand, if you can speak English to foreigners but refuse to do so, it is odd behaviour.



Dark Mediterranean complexion of Efi Goder

We experienced this when my mum and myself were speaking in English. We were able to switch to Greek to avoid confrontation. As someone of Greek Cypriot origin\* (i.e. Greece and Cyprus popular amongst Brits) we are in favour of tourism to improve their current economic climates. As the English saying goes 'Don't bite the hand that feeds you'. I believe Spain will regret these reactions and its hostility mainly directed at the British.



We arrived just before the large scale protests against tourism on Sunday 18th May, at 11am, in Arrecife, Lanzarote, where we were to stay. We were unaware of the large scale protests taking place.

This local protest against tourism was in sync with the general demonstration of 18th May 2025 taking place at the same time in Tenerife, Fuerteventura, El Hierro, La Palma, La Gomera, and on mainland Spain in Barcelona, Valencia and Madrid.

Last year, UK tourists were sprayed with water guns as a result of the locals' growing hostility to the private swimming pools, wasting water when there are severe water shortages. It was reported that a car hire company popular with UK tourists had their vehicles set on fire.

All this was unknown to us before we

**Editor's Note:** \* Yvonne says she is of Greek Cypriot origin. She is also Mauritian through her father. We thank her for this article highlighting the feeling of animosity of the Spanish people towards visitors, though this animosity is more marked towards the British and the English people.

To my mind, Spain is the most beautiful country among the European countries. Each country has its own special cachets that appeal to foreigners, es-

pecially visitors who keep coming back. It is not surprising that a great number of Britishers have chosen Spain for their retirement to settle. For the elderly, the climate is just fantastic, especially as opposed to the gloomy British weather in winter.

I, myself, fell in love with Spain when I was still a youngster in Mauritius through the such movies as Andalousie, La Belle de Cadix, Violettes Impériales, featuring the décors of Andalousia, Cadiz, Sevilla, Grenada with the enticing spanish music of the era

enough to make one dreaming then of visiting Spain. When the opportunity was offered to me to go on a tour of Spain, I did not hesitate. I have a great fascination for the Flamenco dance especially as performed by the beautiful Carmen Sevilla. I had my fill in Spain.

I must admit that travelling from the UK, we did not experience any animosity from the locals. The situation seems to have changed considerably as revealed by Yvonne Goder's article. This is certainly sad and dangerous.