

OpenVoiceNews

Transparent. Unbiased. Yours.

Pope Backs UK–Mauritius Chagos Agreement Amid Calls for Justice

August 25, 2025

– Categories: General News



A delegation of Chagossian refugees met Pope Leo XIV at the Vatican, where he expressed strong support for a recent agreement between the United Kingdom and Mauritius, calling it a “significant victory” in the long struggle to address a “grave injustice.”

In May 2025, the UK and Mauritius formalised a treaty transferring sovereignty of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius, while securing continued UK and US use of the Diego Garcia military base under a lease of at least 99 years. The pact includes an annual financial

arrangement, averaging around £101 million per year, aimed at safeguarding the base's strategic role and containing its operations within a specified buffer zone.

Pope Leo XIV encouraged Mauritian authorities to facilitate the return of displaced Chagossians. He emphasised that “all peoples... must be respected by the powerful in their identity and rights, in particular the right to live on their land; no one can be forced into exile.”

The treaty has drawn mixed reactions within the UK. Prime Minister Keir Starmer defended the deal as essential to national security, ensuring enduring access to a critical base and preventing strategic encroachment by other powers. On the other hand, Conservative figures have criticised the agreement as financially burdensome and indicative of compromised sovereignty, citing long-term costs that may reach tens of billions in nominal terms.

Separately, human rights experts, including UN appointees, have raised concerns that the treaty may fall short in securing the full rights of the Chagossian people, including unrestricted access to cultural heritage and the right of return.

At the Vatican meeting, Pope Leo particularly praised Chagossian women for their peaceful activism, highlighting their resilience in pursuing justice and reconciliation.