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## UK Asked to Return Chagos Islands to Mauritius

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**International Court of Justice (ICJ)** has asked the United Kingdom to return the Chagos Archipelago back to Mauritius.

ICJ has said that continued British occupation of the Chagos archipelago is illegal.

### Court's Advisory Opinion

ICJ in its advisory opinion has said that:

- The process of decolonization of Mauritius was not complete when the country was **given independence in 1968** as the Chagos Archipelago was separated.
- The UK should **give up its administrative control** over the Chagos Archipelago as rapidly as possible.

### Background

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- The case was referred to the ICJ, which hears legal submissions over international boundary disputes, after an overwhelming vote in 2017 in the UN general assembly.
- In its submission to the ICJ last year, Mauritius argued it was **coerced into giving up the Chagos Islands**.
  - That separation was in breach of **UN resolution 1514, passed in 1960**, which specifically banned the breakup of colonies before independence.
- The UK government argued that the court did not have jurisdiction to hear the case.

### Likely Impact

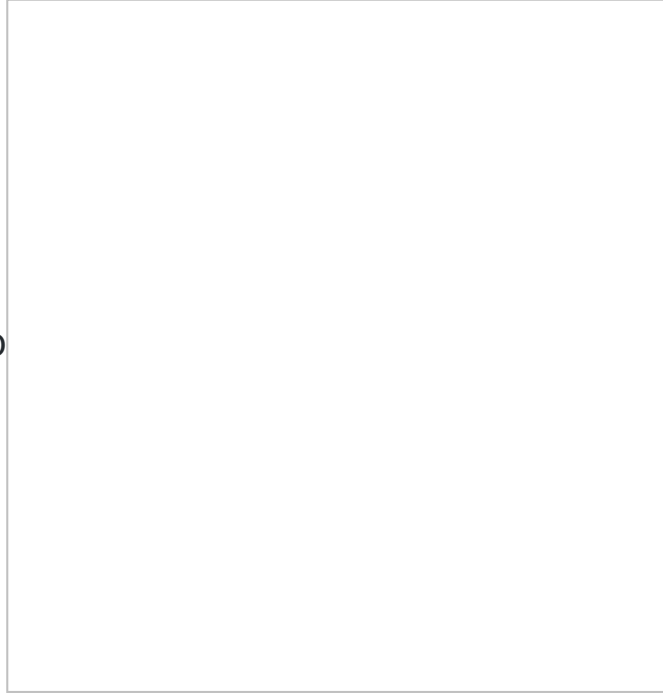
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- **The United Kingdom:** Although the decision by the ICJ is **only advisory**, the judgment is a blow to the UK's prestige on the world stage.
  - The UN general assembly vote in 2017, revealed the waning UK's international influence as many European Countries countries did not support the UK and traditional allies such as Canada abstaining.
- **Mauritius:** The government of Mauritius has welcomed the decision and said that is is

a “historic moment in efforts to bring colonialism to an end, and to promote human rights, self-determination and the international rule of law”.

- **On US Military Base:** The **opinion is unlikely to impact the U.S. military** base as Mauritius has said in the UN General Assembly that it is committed to the continued operation of the base in **Diego Garcia under a long-term framework.**

Chagos Archipelago



- The Chagos Archipelago, island group in the central Indian Ocean, located about 1,000 miles (1,600 km) south of the **southern tip of the Indian subcontinent.**
- In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Chagos were **governed from Mauritius**, which was a **British Colony.**
- The UK retained possession of the Chagos archipelago, which includes the strategic US airbase of Diego Garcia, after Mauritius gained its independence in 1968, by **paying Mauritius more than £4m for the islands.**
- The U.K. government refers to it as **British Indian Ocean Territory or BIOT.**
- About 1,500 native islanders were deported from the Diego Garcia island in Chagos archipelago so that it could be leased to **the US for the airbase in 1971.**
- Mauritius claimed that it was forced to give up the islands in 1965 in exchange for independence, which it gained in 1968.

## India's Stand

- India has **supported Mauritius stand** on the Chagos Archipelago.
- India in its submission to ICJ has said that the Chagos Archipelago has been and continues to be with Mauritius and demanded **sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago from Britain.**
- India stayed committed to its **Indian Ocean neighbor Mauritius, as well as its anti-**

**colonial credentials.**