

Princes Street mural urges support for Chagos



In the late sixties and early seventies, the native inhabitants of Diego Garcia and the other Chagos Islands were forcibly expelled so the US could build a (still extant) military base on what remains British territory. There's over six thousand miles between Diego Garcia and Edinburgh, but thanks to film-maker Gillian Morrison, artist Mike Greenlaw and his associate Greg Mitchell, one prominent spot in the Scottish capital is now highlighting the dark history of the islands and the struggles of its people.

The project is a powerfully simple depiction of almost half a century of injustice. Completed by the above named artists under the banner of Artists for Justice and Peace, the mural can currently be seen outside St John's Church on Princes Street in central Edinburgh. It has been unveiled at a critical time with the UK Government poised to take a decision on whether to support Chagossian return in the next few weeks. A Government feasibility report has already indicated return would be entirely possible in social, environmental and economic terms.

Gillian and Mike became acquainted with one another, and the fight for the Chagossian justice, via the [Edinburgh South 'Yes Cafe,'](#) a social and political hub for pro-Scottish independence activists. The cafe has hosted screenings of the John Pilger film 'Stealing a Nation,' which details the Chagossian deportation and exile, and the cafe is planning further events to promote the Chagossian cause.



The artist Mike Greenlaw explained that St John's had a long

and proud tradition of political murals. Mike noted that “my work on the Chagossian people’s struggle is the latest mural in a 32 year history of murals at St. John’s, which has encompassed issues such as apartheid, the conflict in Israel/Palestine, environmental Issues, world poverty and nuclear arms.”

“I hope that my work might help to raise some awareness of the plight of the people of the Chagos Islands,” he added explaining the motivation behind his choosing the Chagossian cause as the subject for his piece.

Gillian Morrison, as well as orchestrating the project, is currently making a highly-anticipated film about the Chagossian people’s deportation, suffering in exile and fight to return.

Newly appointed UK Chagos Support Association Patron and celebrated poet Benjamin Zephaniah thanked those involved for their work and added that he hoped the art work would motivate people to support the return campaign.

“2015 is a massive opportunity to win a measure of justice for the Chagossian people. The Government have committed to making a decision on supporting return prior to the election, we need more people demanding our MPs support the Chagossians’ simple human right to go home. We are hugely grateful to Mike, Gillian and Greg for delivering this fantastic project spreading the word on the urgency of ending decades of oppression.”