

Meeting : Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (C24)

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I am Rodger Edwards, an elected member of the Falkland Islands Legislative Assembly and I take great pleasure in making this statement to you all today on this our 30th Anniversary of Liberation from the illegal invasion and seventy-four day occupation by the Armed Forces of Argentina.

As a result of that defeat, Argentina lost its brutal military dictatorship and has subsequently experienced the longest period of democracy in its history.

Unfortunately, this has not stopped Argentina from persisting with its attempts to deny the people on the Falkland Islands our democratic rights.

This Argentine Government attempts to distance itself from the actions of previous Argentine military governments. I accept that Argentina has changed and I am pleased that it has. However, I do not understand how the Government of Argentina can absolve itself and its people from its recent past, while simultaneously seeking to punish and harm a small and peaceful Falkland Islands people for something that it incorrectly claims to have happened almost two centuries ago.

This Argentine Government claims to fight against colonialism yet wishes to take away our peoples' rights, annex our islands and subject our people to alien subjugation and domination, the very definition of colonialism.

This Argentine Government claims that Argentines are banned from visiting or settling in the islands. This claim is not borne out when you look at the number of Argentines visiting by both sea and air every year, nor by the small but significant number of Argentines who live permanently in the islands. Many of these Argentines have lived sufficiently long in the islands to now consider themselves Falkland Islanders.

This Argentine Government claims to fight for human rights. What about the rights of the Falkland Islanders ? Or do human beings not have human rights if they reside on a piece of land that Argentina wants ?

This Argentine Government claims that the UK is ignoring United Nations General Assembly resolutions when it is itself ignoring the United Nations Charter which obliges all Members to respect the principles of equal rights and self-determination.

In summary, this is all clear evidence of hypocrisy. I understand from the recent news that the accusations of hypocrisy is not something new for this Argentine Government, but it is nonetheless symptomatic of this Argentine Government and its policy towards

the Falkland Islands. I can assure you, however, that the Falkland Islands Government does not try to interfere with the currency or location of a citizen's savings.

This Government of Argentina has been conducting economic warfare against the people in the Falkland Islands. During the last few years, Argentina has withdrawn from almost all forms of cooperation. In addition, it has banned charter flights through its airspace. Under Presidential Decree 256, it has threatened to intercept shipping, it has attempted to persuade other South American countries to refuse lawful entry of Falkland Islands registered ships and, through intimidation and association, it has tried to harm and damage our hydrocarbons industry. Moreover, it has attempted to damage our fishing and tourism industries which we have been successfully developing.

The Falkland Islands has grown out of its colonial status and has become a democratic Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom. It now has devolved powers and a new post-colonial constitution, as well as newfound wealth and, since the eviction of the Argentine forces on this day in 1982, we have moved forward with a newfound energy and confidence to face the future.

Our post-colonial constitution is, in itself, a reflection of our aspirations to press on with internal self-government.

Today therefore, all that we ask for, is the right to determine our own future, without having to endure the belligerent and bullying tactics of a neighboring country.

Mister Chairman,

Last year we invited you and Members of the Committee to our islands, so that you could see for yourselves the progress that we have made in developing our islands, our constitution, and our internal self-government.

This Special Committee offers advice on the options available to non-self-governing territories in the exercise of their right to self-determination, and we could have discussed this in detail. Sadly, you did not take up this very genuine invitation and so I extend the same invitation to you again today. I am sure that by accepting, by seeing our islands, and by talking to our people you will recognize just how important it is to us to exercise our right of self-determination as we are currently doing.