



TIA BELAU

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PROTEST AT NGERKEBESANG

Disputes over ownership of lands in Ngerkebesang spilled over from the Judicial Building in Medalai to the streets of Koror's southern hamlet this week. On Monday, March 9, over 50 people of Ngerkebesang gathered with signs to protest at the entrance of Echol, a section in the hamlet where 17 lots which were subject of a recent lawsuit, are located.

It all started with an appellate ruling of the Palau Supreme Court last month awarding the ownership of 17 lots to Rosamunda Tubeito, Florentine Yangilmau, Faustino Tirso, Kuterbis Kutermaiei, Sumor Allis, Quadalupe Carlos, and Mariano Carlos who are all originally from the southwest island. The Court denied the claims of the original clans of Ngerkebesang including Omrekongel Clan, Odilang Clan, and Luik Clan.

On February 10, 1997, the trial court affirmed an LCHO decision awarding titles to the southwest islanders. Ngerkebesang clans then appealed but Chief Justice Arthur Ngiraksong, and Associate Justices Larry Miller and Barrie Michelsen on February 20 affirmed the decisions of the lower court.

On March 4, 1998, the people of Ngerkebesang sent a petition to Chief IBEDUL Yutaka Gibbons expressing their grievance. In the petition, they said that the people of the Southwest Islands were brought to Koror to live because a typhoon devastated their island in 1903. When they had first come to Koror, they were brought by Ibedul Ilengelekei to Ngerbodol to live but because of difficulties that they encountered, they were al-

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Ngerkebesang Protest_____

lowed by Espangel Ewatel pursuant to Palau custom of generosity to live at Echang, Ngerkebesang. They moved to another place during the war but returned after and the Ngerkebesang Chiefs let them settle in Echang. The petition went on to say that the people residing in Echang are selling these lands and that Ngerkebesang people are living on. They want to reclaim all the lands in Echol as original owners and will employ any means through custom or any other measure to take back their lands. The petition was signed by over 100 people of Ngerkebesang.

When Tia Belau interviewed Inabo Katsumi, who holds the title of Mad ra Tol and spokesperson for Espangel, the highest ranking Chief of Ngerkebesang, at the site of demonstration, he said the demonstration will continue until some sort of agreement is reached between both parties and the Palau courts. He said the demonstration is peaceful and that he has asked Public Safety to send Patrol cars once in a while to insure that peace is observed.

People of southwest island states of Sonsorol and Hatohobei were considered non-Palauans as they have different language and culture which are closer to those of outer islands of Yap and Chuuk of the FSM. They came to Koror in 1903 during the German occupation when their islands were destroyed by a typhoon. They were relocated in Eang village in Ngerkebesang with the agreement of High Chief Ibedul of Koror and Espangel of Ngerkebesang. They have resided in Eang since then and their names were registered in the Japanese Land Registration (Tochi Daichio) as owners of the lands in Eang and Echol which was the basis of their victory in Court.

TO SOUTHWEST ISLANDERS AT ECHANG

August 11, 1998

No doubt, you prevailed in a recently concluded court case and must be pleased with the outcome. We, on the other hand, are neither pleased nor do we feel the judicial process has been right.

We wish to make it perfectly clear on behalf of all the people of Ngerkebesang, young and old, today and all the future generation that; there will never be peace in our hearts until this matter is properly and satisfactorily resolved according to Palauan culture and history.

The Court did not preclude Echang from the traditional or cultural jurisdiction or authority of Ngerkebesang and its traditional leaders according to customs. You are not governed under the traditional authority of Southwest Chiefs. At the same time, Echang was abolished as a hamlet of Koror by virtue of Koror State law. Your residency and properties are properly located within Ngerkebesang where we hold traditional authority with many responsibilities. The Court did not grant you any of these traditional responsibilities or rights - nor did our Palauan custom - for these are our ancestral and traditional rights.

Please know that you are governed by the rule of customs and traditions under the leadership of Ngerkebesang Chiefs - by virtue of your residency in Ngerkebesang, Now and forever.

Please know that we will not continue to live with no peace in our hearts and our lives. Do not think for a moment that the conclusion of the court case brought peace and harmony, sense of justice or good relationships to the Ngerkebesang community.

A day and time will come when we will once again revisit and face these unfinished deliberations. When that day is decided you and your representatives will be called by the traditional leaders of this community pursuant to custom.

Be prepared for this is a serious challenge and a responsibility that grips the heart and soul of Ngerkebesang and its people. In a few days an announcement will be made and a messenger will duly inform you in advance of the meeting.


Southwest Islanders at Echang

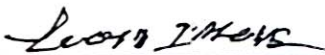
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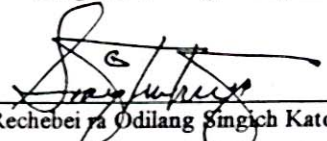
Ngerkebesang Chiefs:

✓ ✓ X  
Espangel Esebei Obak ra Iwong Imeong



Rengiil ra Eluil Sisco Gibbons


Rengiil ra Okreng Leong Imeong


Rechebei ra Tjhed August Ngirameketii

 ✓
Rechebei ra Odilang Singich Katosang

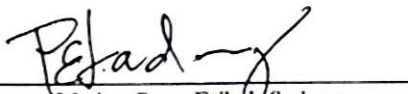

Tbekriu er Bab Ricky Mechol

 ✓
Tbekriu er Iou Olikong Katosang

✓ 
Bedul er Bab Masaharu Maidesil

Bedul er Iou


Mad ra Toll Inabo Katsumi


Mad ra Ross Etibel Sadang

CC: High Chief Ibedul Yutaka M. Gibbons
High Chief Reklat Rafael Ngirmang

President Kuniwo Nakamura
Senate President Isidoro Rudimch

Speaker Ignacio Anastacio, House of Delegates
Governor John C. Gibbons, Koror State Government
Speaker Salvador Tellames, Koror State Legislature
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