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Environment

Mayotte: The essential solidarity and the necessary anti-colonial policy

- IV Online magazine - 2025 - IVP - January 2025 -

Publication date: Monday 13 January 2025

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Cyclone Chido ravaged Mayotte on December 14, 2024. This island in the Comoros archipelago was established as the 101st French department on March 31, 2001.

What strikes you first is the poverty-stricken state of Mayotte, its extreme vulnerability, which made it a field of ruins after the passage of Chido. This is a French department whose official figures, provided by INSEE (the official French statistical institute) are eloquent in themselves: 77 per cent of the population live below the poverty line, 66 per cent live in shanty towns, the unemployment rate is 37 per cent, 42% per cent have a monthly income of less than 160 euros.

This is the situation reserved for Mayotte by the French state. A situation which has worsened over the course of racist operations like Wuambushu [1].

Colonial management of the disaster

When Mayotte is struck, it is France that is struck, intones the French government. All hands on deck, large-scale media campaign, procession in Mayotte of ministers and the head of state. It is also the omnipresent spectacle of France, at the bedside of its department in distress.

It was not the Bayrou government that was going to change the situation, with the contempt it displayed during its tenure. Nor Marine Le Pen, making a fool of herself with her insipid demagoguery about the Frenchness of Mayotte, a French Muslim island 10,000 km from Paris.

What is revolting is that this "national solidarity" has been strongly marked by the colonial treatment of "overseas". We must add to this the coherent policy aiming to break the unity of the Comoros archipelago in order to "anchor Mayotte" in the French Republic. Against the immediate interests of the population, who especially need help.

The priority is to prevent Comorian solidarity in order to cut the umbilical cord to the islands of the Archipelago. Just think! Mayotte is no longer presented as one of the islands of the Comoros, but as an archipelago in itself, with the perfidious objective of removing it from its natural whole. Geography is therefore misused to obey the wishes of the French leaders.

Solidarity and reconstruction in the Comoros

In the face of disaster, solidarity must as always play a full role. Unfortunately, this is not what drives the government. Faced with the vital water problem that arose in the aftermath of Chido, the Ssate blocked Anjouan, preferring to transit via Reunion, more than 1,500 km away. Worse still, Minister of the Interior Retailleau and his ilk are brandishing their magic weapon: illegal immigration, as if it were responsible for the natural disaster and should therefore be the compass for reconstruction.

The fact remains that the solidarity of Comorians is in full swing, in the Comoros as well as in the diaspora in France.

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They even use the fragile boats called "kwassa kwassa" to supply Mayotte with water and other basic necessities, while in France, they have set up dedicated funds of solidarity such as "SOS Chido". This is a significant fundraiser, because with nearly 400,000 Comorians living in France, mainly in Marseille, Paris and Lyon, a solidarity campaign is possible.

Finally, on this 50th anniversary of the independence of the Comoros, we must ensure that Mayotte does not remain isolated, and certainly not from the rest of the Comoros!

Any reconstruction of Mayotte that does not integrate it into its natural environment will inevitably be doomed to failure, and yet this is the path followed by Macron and his ephemeral governments.

Published in the weekly [l'Anticapitaliste](#), issue736, January 9 2025.

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[1] Operation Wuambushu was launched in February 2023. Its aims were to combat criminality, destroy shanty towns and hunt down illegal migrants. It seems to have been a failure on all counts.