

PACIFIC PEOPLES'
MISSION TO KANAKY
NEW CALEDONIA



A large, light beige, stylized Kanak symbol, known as the "Vaka" or "Vaka Kanak", is centered in the background. It features a central vertical axis with various geometric and organic shapes, including a pointed top, a circular middle section, and a base that resembles a stylized human figure or a plant.

PACIFIC PEOPLES' MISSION TO KANAKY NEW CALEDONIA

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FORWARD

The journey of self-determination in Kanaky New Caledonia, is a profound saga of resilience, identity, and the unyielding quest for autonomy. Kanaky New Caledonia stands as a testament to the complex interplay of colonial history and the aspirations of its indigenous inhabitants.

For decades, the Kanak people have asserted their right to self-determination, seeking to reclaim their land, culture, and governance from French rule. Their struggle is not merely about political sovereignty; it encompasses a broader vision of social justice, environmental stewardship, and the preservation of their identity and traditions. The events leading up to and following the 1998 Nouméa Accord reflect the intricate dynamics of this struggle, where dialogue and negotiation have been crucial in navigating a pathway towards greater autonomy.

The narratives surrounding the self-determination movement are rich and multifaceted, encompassing stories of sacrifice, alliance-building, and the enduring commitment of Kanak leaders and communities. The quest by the Kanak peoples for independence is not solely a political endeavour, but a cultural renaissance that seeks to honour the legacy of ancestors while forging a future grounded in self-governance and equality. Importantly, this struggle is emblematic of a global phenomenon where Indigenous peoples are asserting their rights in the face of historical injustices and demanding recognition and respect within contemporary political frameworks.

This report presents the findings and recommendations of the Pacific Peoples' Mission following its rapid pastoral and stakeholder assessment in Kanaky New Caledonia, undertaken in the aftermath of the May 2024 uprising. Convened at the invitation of regional civil society partners, the Mission listened to a broad cross-section of Kanak society, documenting the deep impacts of the crisis and the structural challenges that continue to shape the territory's political, social, and economic landscape.

The Mission's work underscores the urgent need for renewed regional solidarity, neutral mediation, and the meaningful inclusion of customary leaders, faith-based organisations, and community institutions in the ongoing journey toward self-determination. It highlights the resilience and leadership of local communities, particularly women, youth, and faith groups, in sustaining hope and promoting recovery amid adversity. At the same time, the report does not shy away from detailing the acute injustices, human rights violations, and socio-economic concerns that demand immediate attention and reforms.

Regionally, the struggles for self-determination in the Pacific reflect a diverse tapestry of Indigenous movements aimed at achieving autonomy, cultural preservation, and political sovereignty.

This region, characterised by its rich cultural diversity and colonial histories, has seen various Pacific nations and territories advocate for their rights to self-governance, often in response to the historical impacts of colonialism and ongoing neo-colonial practices.

These struggles are often intertwined with broader themes such as environmental sustainability, cultural resurgence, and the fight against climate change, which disproportionately affects Pacific Island nations. The emphasis on reclaiming land, preserving traditional practices, and asserting Indigenous rights underpins many of these movements.

The self-determination struggles in the Pacific are rich and varied, embodying the ongoing quest for identity, autonomy, and justice amidst the legacies of colonialism. They highlight the resilience of Indigenous peoples and their commitment to securing a future that honours their heritage while navigating contemporary challenges.

We offer this report in the spirit of partnership and accompaniment, believing that a peaceful, just, and inclusive future for Kanaky New Caledonia is within reach. We trust its insights will assist Pacific leaders, policymakers, and all those committed to supporting the aspirations of Kanak communities as they navigate this critical moment in their history.

“The quest by the Kanak peoples for independence is not solely a political endeavour, but a cultural renaissance that seeks to honour the legacy of ancestors while forging a future grounded in self-governance and equality.”



Dame Meg Taylor



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INTRODUCTION



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to the invitation from the Protestant Church of Kanaky New Caledonia (EPKNC), the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC), the Pacific Network on Globalisation (PANG), and the Senat Coutumier, a Pacific Peoples' Mission was formed to engage in cultural exchange and pastoral visits (in April 2025) with groups most impacted by the May 2024 events in Kanaky New Caledonia. The mission, an expression of regional solidarity, aimed to find a peaceful and just resolution to the ongoing legacy of French colonialism. Recognising the Kanak people's deep, millennia-old connections to the Pacific, the mission affirmed the right of the Kanak people to self-determination. It also acknowledged their willingness to build a new society with non-Kanak communities. This report presents the mission's findings, offering a rapid assessment of the situation on the ground to support the self-determination aspirations of the people of Kanaky.

The mission concluded that the crisis in Kanaky New Caledonia, in May 2024, was an uprising by those most affected by France's flawed decolonisation process. It further affirmed that the May 2024 uprising resulted from long-standing socio-economic inequalities and that France has consistently breached trust. The mission raised concerns about the 'politics of revenge,' including the withdrawal of education scholarships and increased public transport fares, which disproportionately affect Kanak and Oceanian communities.

Despite a 2023 French audit claiming compliance with UN resolutions, the mission found otherwise, noting France's decision to 'unfreeze' local electoral rolls after decades of unaddressed Kanak grievances triggered the uprising. The promised rebalancing of socio-economic power, anticipated over 30 years ago by the Accords, has not materialised. Key alternative institutions, such as churches, local communities, and traditional leadership, which are central to the Kanak's social fabric, have largely been excluded from the Accords.

Recognising the Kanak people's deep, millennia-old connections to the Pacific, the mission affirmed the right of the Kanak people to self-determination



Specific Findings Revealed

1

France is not a neutral party, as it demonstrates vested interests, repeatedly breaches its promises, and employs perceived politically motivated tactics, such as strategically delaying provincial elections and transferring Kanak political leaders to mainland France.

2

A myriad of socio-economic injustices experienced by Kanak are pervasive. Kanak land restitution has been slow and sometimes caused unaddressed internal tensions.

- Critics see the education system as French-centric, channelling Kanak students into 'technical' streams and perpetuating economic inequality.
- The health sector faces a critical shortage of medical professionals, exacerbated by the May 2024 uprising. Over 10,000 people, including an estimated 20% of doctors, have left the country, highlighting the Accords' failure to improve Kanak access to medical professionals.
- The uprising led to the destruction of 800 businesses and the loss of over 20,000 jobs, further destabilising the nickel-dependent economy.
- The criminal justice system is perceived to have a double standard, with Kanak youth accounting for over 80% of the prison population.



The mission recommends negotiating new institutional arrangements that allow for the immediate release and return of all Kanak leaders, including FLNKS President Christian Tein^[1], from jails across France. It also urges respect for Kanak societal concerns and priorities, addressing overdue rebalancing targets in land, education, employment, and the economy, as well as resolving injustices and human rights violations. To facilitate the earliest possible, free, and fair Provincial elections. Most importantly, establishing arrangements that direct the pathway to independence.

Regional bodies, such as the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), should provide neutral mediation for the decolonisation process, observed by Pacific and international experts.

They should also facilitate early, neutral assistance to promote Kanak competencies, revitalise the regional solidarity movement to support Kanaky, strengthen people-to-people exchanges, and ensure Kanaky New Caledonia remains on the UN list of Non-Self-Governing Territories with self-determination aspirations as a priority for Pacific leaders.

Key messages and actions (Annexe 4) from the mission emphasise reaffirming regional, cultural, and ecumenical solidarity with the people of Kanaky New Caledonia and their right to self-determination, acknowledging the spirit of resilience among Kanak communities. The mission urges the French government to take concrete steps to rebuild trust, explicitly calling for the immediate release of FLNKS President Christian Tein and other Kanak political prisoners, as well as the immediate holding of Provincial elections.

Regional bodies, such as the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), should provide neutral mediation for the decolonisation process, observed by Pacific and international experts.

ABOUT THE MISSION



As a Pacific Peoples Mission, we were invited by the Protestant Church of Kanaky New Caledonia (Église protestante de Kanaky Nouvelle-Calédonie (EPKNC), the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC), Pacific Network on Globalisation (PANG), the Senat Coutumier and other solidarity partners in Kanaky New Caledonia to engage in cultural exchange and pastoral visits (in April 2025) with the groups most impacted by the events of May 2024.

The Mission was an expression of regional, cultural and ecumenical solidarity in the search for a peaceful and just resolution to the ongoing legacy of colonisation in Kanaky New Caledonia. The mission delegation consisted of Anna Naupa, Dr. David Small, Emele Duituturaga, and Lopeti Senituli, with secretariat support from EKPNC and PANG (Annexe 3).

We endorse/hear the call of Do Kamo^[2] to re-centre humanity within the dialogue around the real needs of the people of Kanaky New Caledonia. A concept rooted in traditional Kanak values, Do Kamo emphasises the ideal of humanity in harmony with God, others, and creation, and also serves as a foundational guide for this mission's engagement with churches and communities.

Kanaky is part of the Pacific, as it has been for millennia, bound by kinship, history and cultural connections. The Kanak people followed traditional chemins (pathways) across land and ocean, to connect with neighbouring peoples, such as the historic ties between the Loyalty Islands and Vanuatu. France's relationship with the region is relatively recent, dating back only a few hundred years, and has been based on conquest, domination, and exploitation.





The Mission recognises the Kanak people's right to self-determination. It acknowledges their openness to constructing a new, just society together with non-Kanak communities that share a commitment to an independent Kanaky New Caledonia.

The Mission's reflections were informed by discussions with organisations, neighbourhood groups, collectives, solidarity movements, political parties, churches and youth and women's groups. Despite limited resources, these groups tirelessly seek ways to collaborate and work with other ethnic groups towards a just future.

The Mission was inspired and empowered to reaffirm the solidarity and ongoing support of Pacific peoples for the Kanak people's right to self-determination.

This report presents the findings from the Pacific People's Mission to Kanaky, a crucial rapid assessment of the current realities on the ground. Beyond simply observational, it offers grounded lenses through which to view the political and human rights avenues leading towards genuine reconciliation. In doing so, this report aims to strengthen pathways that genuinely support the self-determination aspirations of the people of Kanaky.

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POLITICAL CONTEXT



The Pacific Peoples' Mission encountered a Kanaky New Caledonia struggling to deal with the aftermath of a significant political and social uprising, a forceful eruption indicative of profound and systemic issues affecting the nation's economic, political, and social fabric. Although frustration runs through the entire country, the Mission primarily interacted with counterparts at the epicentre of the uprising – grassroots groups, collectives, and individuals, most of whom live in or commute to/within Noumea and the surrounding areas in the Southern Province. These included youth, women, educators, workers' representatives, community advocates, church leaders, and cultural and political institutions.

In these engagements, the Mission was offered a glimpse into the dynamics of the independence movement, as well as the constant internal negotiations, concessions, and reconciliations needed to sustain a shared vision of independence among diverse groups with equally diverse strategies. While agreeing on the ultimate objective— an independent and sovereign nation—different forces within the broad independence movement have long debated the best pathway to achieve this goal. These divisive debates, however, are tempered by traditions of cultural dialogue and consensus-building that have evolved over time.

These dynamics are concurrently subjected to France's longstanding pressures to thwart independence, and a government bureaucracy that has, since May 2024, pursued policies in the Southern Province that strongly demonstrate a politics of revenge against those they perceive as responsible for the uprising.

The delegation observed that prevailing media narratives often oversimplify, misrepresent and perpetuate the fundamental drivers of this uprising, which are rooted in the enduring and deeply held aspirations and anxieties of the Kanak people concerning their right to sovereignty and self-determination. Women's active participation and leadership were consistently evident throughout the Mission's engagements, demonstrating their pivotal role in peace-making during and after this popular uprising. These women have been central to the movement, playing a key role in restoring calm and enhancing social resilience within impacted communities. All while navigating the complexities of daily life, grappling with loss, and confronting what appear to be ongoing, institutionalised responses targeting their communities in the wake of the uprising.

These divisive debates, however, are tempered by traditions of cultural dialogue and consensus-building over time.

At the time of the Mission, France was implementing a post-Accords negotiation process with Kanaky New Caledonia's political parties to determine a lasting solution to the sovereignty and self-determination question. Led by the French Overseas Minister, Manuel Valls, the process entailed multiple visits by the French government to Noumea over a period of 2 months, at a pace determined by Paris. Following May 2024, provincial elections were deferred due to the territory's security situation and political instability. A common sentiment expressed during the Mission was that the French State was using a political atmosphere of diversionary tactics, 'stretching out the finish line' for decolonisation, and changing the goalposts without heeding the population's views.

In August 2024, four UN Human Rights Special Rapporteurs released a statement, highlighting the French government's failure to respect the fundamental rights to participation, consultation, and free, prior, and informed consent of the Kanak Indigenous People and their institutions.

Later in October 2024, France and the Government of New Caledonia invited an external mission from the Pacific Islands Forum to assess the situation post-May 2024. The Pacific Islands Forum Troika-Plus mission consisted of the Prime Ministers of Tonga, the Cook Islands, and Fiji, the Foreign Minister of the Solomon Islands, and the Forum Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General. This was the highest-level ministerial mission ever sent by the Forum to monitor developments in the French dependency. The PIF Troika mission primarily focused on the political and economic situation in the region.

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PACIFIC MISSION FINDINGS

REALITIES AND LIMITATIONS OF THE
DECOLONISATION PROCESS UNDER THE
INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS





The findings of a decolonisation audit for Kanaky New Caledonia, commissioned by France, were published in 2023 (Audit Report: New Caledonia Decolonisation Audit, May 27, 2023).^[3] Using an audit framework based primarily on the provisions and criteria for decolonisation outlined in the key UN resolutions (Resolutions 15/14 (1960) and 41/41/A (1986)), it found that France, as the Administering Power, had met its obligations under the above institutional arrangements.

However, a cursory assessment of the outbreak of violence in Kanaky New Caledonia, in May 2024, which ended a period of 'relative peace' under the Accords, offers immediate and compelling grounds to reconsider this conclusion. Indeed, the Mission clearly heard that the events of May 2024 were neither the result of a politically motivated attempt by independence activists to derail the self-determination process nor merely senseless opportunism, as claimed by French and loyalist voices. Instead, it was an uprising by people most impacted by the long-standing neglect in an inequitable decolonisation process.

The uprising resulted from France's systematic failure to address longstanding grievances and the inability of the Accords to address these issues. France's decision to open the voter rolls was the final straw that triggered the populist uprising.

The Mission was informed that by 2018, France had demonstrably strayed from the spirit of these agreements. More than thirty years after the initial Accords of 1988, the promised rebalancing of socio-economic power remains unfulfilled. While seemingly spontaneous, the youth-led uprising that erupted in May 2024 was, in fact, the inevitable consequence of long-festering and widening socio-economic disparities, a stark indictment of France's flawed approach to decolonisation. Political parties, labour unions, and community organisations had repeatedly warned the French state about these escalating frustrations, especially in the period following the flawed 2021 independence referendum.

The Mission heard concrete examples of this abandonment such as the continued alienation of customary groups from ancestral land with over 70% still in state hands or with private non-Kanak interests, failure to provide adequate high quality professional training for Kanak, and lack of genuine effort to transfer capacities and responsibilities, to France's unilateral decision to 'unfreeze' local electoral rolls for the provincial elections – the immediate/ultimate trigger for the uprising – was in itself considered the last straw of colonial indignities. There was a clear articulation that the era of further Accords is over; the immediate demand is for tangible actions that genuinely pave the way for self-determination, sovereignty, and independence for Kanaky.

While the Matignon-Oudinot Accords (1988), the Noumea Accord (1998), and the UN Resolution restoring New Caledonia to the Decolonisation List represent significant formal institutional frameworks, the Mission's observations underscore a critical oversight: these arrangements have largely excluded vital alternative institutions that form the very fabric of Kanaky's political, social, and economic life. Churches, local communities, cultural systems, and their customary leaders, along with Pacific regional bodies and communities, form powerful and influential networks that operate alongside formal structures. The Mission's findings reveal that the pathway to decolonisation for Kanaky cannot be solely navigated through the lens of these Accords. Instead, it must holistically incorporate and recognise the crucial roles and perspectives of these often-overlooked yet deeply embedded institutions.

The following discussion highlights the realities and limitations of the decolonisation process under the prescribed institutional framework. These testimonies, shared from different perspectives, including those of women and youth, weave together official policies, formal statistics, and records with people's real-life experiences and observations. The issues and challenges are covered thematically by sector (education, health, employment, economy, politics, etc), noting also their cross-cutting nature.

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POLITICAL DIMENSIONS



I. Call for Unity

The Mission recognised that unity within the independence movement is crucial and urgent. This is particularly true in the context of multiple socio-economic crises, perpetuated by France's failure to rebalance, which is steeped in the politics of fear and the entrenchment of loyalist positions. The Mission was assured that, while the differences in the independentists' strategy were acknowledged, the movement remained united on a shared vision for an independent country; where differences and internal conflict did occur, groups would strive to find ways of working together.

- Further endorsements during the subsequent 40-year period affirming the inclusion of all peoples of New Caledonia in a shared destiny, despite the hostility of some members of the anti-independence movement towards a pan-Oceanian identity;
- The subsidisation of the development of all communities through the benefits of the nickel industry;
- Enduring patience and willingness to engage in peaceful dialogue with other parties for a shared destiny, despite repeated breaches of trust by France and hyper-provincialisation, federalism and extreme orientation of loyalist parties.

II. Concessions by Kanaks on Sovereignty

Kanak concessions have been constant and central to the Accords processes and to the engagement with the French state, loyalists and other resident communities. The Mission heard that the leaders of the independence movement had, by their participation in and endorsement of the 1988 agreements, made crucial albeit costly concessions. Other instances include:

- The wishes of the leaders of the independence movement to include non-Kanak in their vision of an independent future;

III. Weaponisation of Democracy by France

The Mission notes that France is not a neutral arbitrator, but has always had a vested interest in the outcome as a colonial power. We conclude that France has egregiously and repeatedly breached promises made in the Accords, yet is now asking Kanaky's independent political movements to trust that it will behave in accordance with the responsibilities of the decolonisation process.

Efforts to find a Kanaky-led solution to a spiralling socio-economic crisis are hampered by France's ongoing interference and political distractions in the decolonisation process. For instance, communities shared with the Mission that the presence of armed gendarmerie within Kanaky neighbourhoods and Kanak-specific public spaces was a show of military intimidation, and undermined Kanaky people's safety and trust in efforts to secure a peaceful resolution. Additionally, many Kanaky voices raised concerns that the ban on social media (TikTok) and media censorship by French authorities were tools of biased reporting that favoured pro-French, anti-Kanak perspectives, weakening efforts for a Kanak-led solution to the uprising and a just pathway for all. This divide persists and is perpetuated through French institutions and political structures, manifesting as a widening gulf between political processes and socio-economic concerns.

The Mission was informed that the timeframes unilaterally imposed by France do not allow for adequate time and space for post-May 2024 grieving and recovery, nor for consultation with the people. France displayed a similar uncompromising behaviour when it refused to engage with Kanak dissatisfaction over the third independence referendum in December 2021. This referendum was rushed through amid the COVID pandemic, despite calls for a delay.

The Mission heard that France's repeated and continuing breaches of trust have created deep reluctance to enter into negotiations with the French Government. The Mission heard from Kanak communities that the following ongoing Kanak concerns

remain strategically ignored by France as a political weapon of maintaining division:

1. Unilateral change to the tripartite Nouméa Accords regarding the third referendum and refusal to hold a free and fair third referendum
2. Belligerent insistence on unfreezing the electoral lists set up by the Nouméa Accord
3. Excessively violent response to protests on and in the weeks following 13 May.
4. Law enforcement agencies failed to deal fairly and impartially with the civil unrest that started on 13 May.
5. Refusal to allow Provincial elections to take place despite the evidence from the legislative elections of June 2024 that a free and fair election was possible, even amid conflict (Box 1).
6. The arrest and transfer to France of political leaders of the Kanak independence movement.^[4]



Box 1: Strategic Delays of Provincial Elections

Various Kanaky political voices informed the Mission that the Provincial Elections were crucial because the pro-independence support base was increasing, and there was a likely chance that the pro-independence parties would win the Southern Provincial elections. France had stated that the Provincial Elections were not taking place due to the security situation and political instability in the territory. Following the 2024 uprisings, the French government argued that the conditions were not conducive to a free and fair electoral process. The Kanak people viewed France's ongoing delay to call for Provincial elections as a strategic move on its part to buy time for pro-France parties within KNC to build support, and at the same time, create situations that make it difficult for Kanak people to mobilise their existing support base, detract neighbours from political rallies and instead focus on meeting basic needs, and forcing Kanak leaders into a France-prioritised timeline for negotiations that did not fit the needs of Kanak communities post uprising. This is a demonstration of France's weaponising a tool of democracy to subjugate the Kanak people's political rights. The implications of France's strategic delay tactics fuel the mistrust in a genuine process towards a peaceful and just KNC for all.

The mission was told by a community leader that, 'The delay in the Provincial Elections is a political ploy by France to allow for the current loyalist provincial administration to further alienate Kanak and Oceanian populations from any social welfare benefits, holding the Kanaky people in a state of ransom in a choice between their basic needs and their political rights.'

IV. Pathways to Reconciliation

The Mission recognises and amplifies the sentiments of pro-independence voices, stating that a precondition for discussions of reconciliation and pathways forward must be for France to rectify these breaches. This requires taking concrete steps to re-earn the trust and confidence of the representatives of the Kanak people and their legitimate aspirations for self-determination, sovereignty, and independence. Specifically, the French government should accede to calls for:

1. The immediate release of FLNKS President Christian Tein and other Kanak political prisoners.^[5]
2. Free and fair provincial elections should be held immediately.



SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INJUSTICES



I. Land

The colonisation of Kanaky New Caledonia, was a brutally violent process. The French state forcibly acquired Kanak tribal lands to accommodate its colonial priorities, including real estate for White settlers, immigrant workers, farming and mining interests, and as a penal colony.

Land acquisition by the state alienated Kanak from their lands, displacing several tribes to the mountainous eastern half of Grande Terre. This forced 'freeing up' of the fertile plains on its western half for agriculture spanned almost the entire length of the island (Box 2).

This colonial land grab was accompanied by the forced movement of Kanak out of customary lands into prescribed tribal reserves, resulting in the mass dislocation of Kanak populations from 'place'.

According to the Charter of the Kanak People written by the Kanak Customary Senate, this and other French colonial policies '...struck the entirety of the chiefdoms in the Kanak country. In practically every region of la Grande Terre, the violence of colonisation resulted in the disappearance of clans and chiefdoms, and the displacement of all or part of the populations of tribes and entire regions. The trauma of this violence has permanently marked the customary structures and the people who inhabit them' (Charte du Peuple Kanak).'

After more than 170 years of colonisation, and despite provisions in the Accords aimed at rebalancing longstanding inequalities and injustices, customary landowners still hold a mere 27% of the land, while the French state controls 50% and private interests hold 23%.

Box 2: Land Rights in Kanaky, Customary Land and Geopolitical Tensions

For the Kanaky peoples, land is more than just property; it's the foundation of their identity, culture, and social structure. Following the French annexation of the islands in 1853, much of this land was seized for colonial purposes, dispossessing the Kanak and leading to a legacy of profound instability and conflict. Today, a critical issue for Kanak leaders is the recovery and administration of lands that have been alienated, ensuring future generations have access to their ancestral territories.

Recent discussions among Kanak customary chiefs reveal the complex challenges they face in navigating modern land ownership systems while preserving their traditional ways. The current land distribution in New Caledonia is starkly unbalanced, with three primary categories:

- State-owned land (50%): Known as "dominant land," this is under government control.
- Private land (23%): Owned by individuals and corporations, much of it a legacy of colonial settlement.
- Customary land (27%): This comprises land retained by Kanak through designated reserves, and land that has been incrementally returned to the Kanak people since the 1988 Accords. This includes land from the Loyalty Islands, which have been designated as a reserve.

Despite decades of effort calling for the return of alienated lands, the Kanak people hold a minority share of the land. As one chief noted, 'In reality, we have only 17% of the land' when factoring out the Loyalty Islands reserve. A chief recounted the story of a clan whose ancestors were dispossessed of 3,000 hectares, a profound loss that symbolises the broader historical dispossession and injustices.

A central question raised by the chiefs is whether young Kanak people will have access to land in the future, particularly if they cannot afford to buy private property. 'Will the Kanak youth of today have access to land in the future? Land, say, for example, of course, they would have access to private land if they had the money. But if they don't have the money, can they access land through customary means? That is the question.'

This issue highlights a fundamental tension between the Western concept of land as a commodity and the Kanak belief that land is inalienable. This also echoes the values of Do Kamo and the sanctity of human-environment relations. As a chief explained, 'The land depends on the rules of the 4 I's - Inalienable, incessant, incommutable, and imprescriptible. This means that we do not have the right to vote for the land. The land is transferred from generation to generation. We do not have the right to vote.'

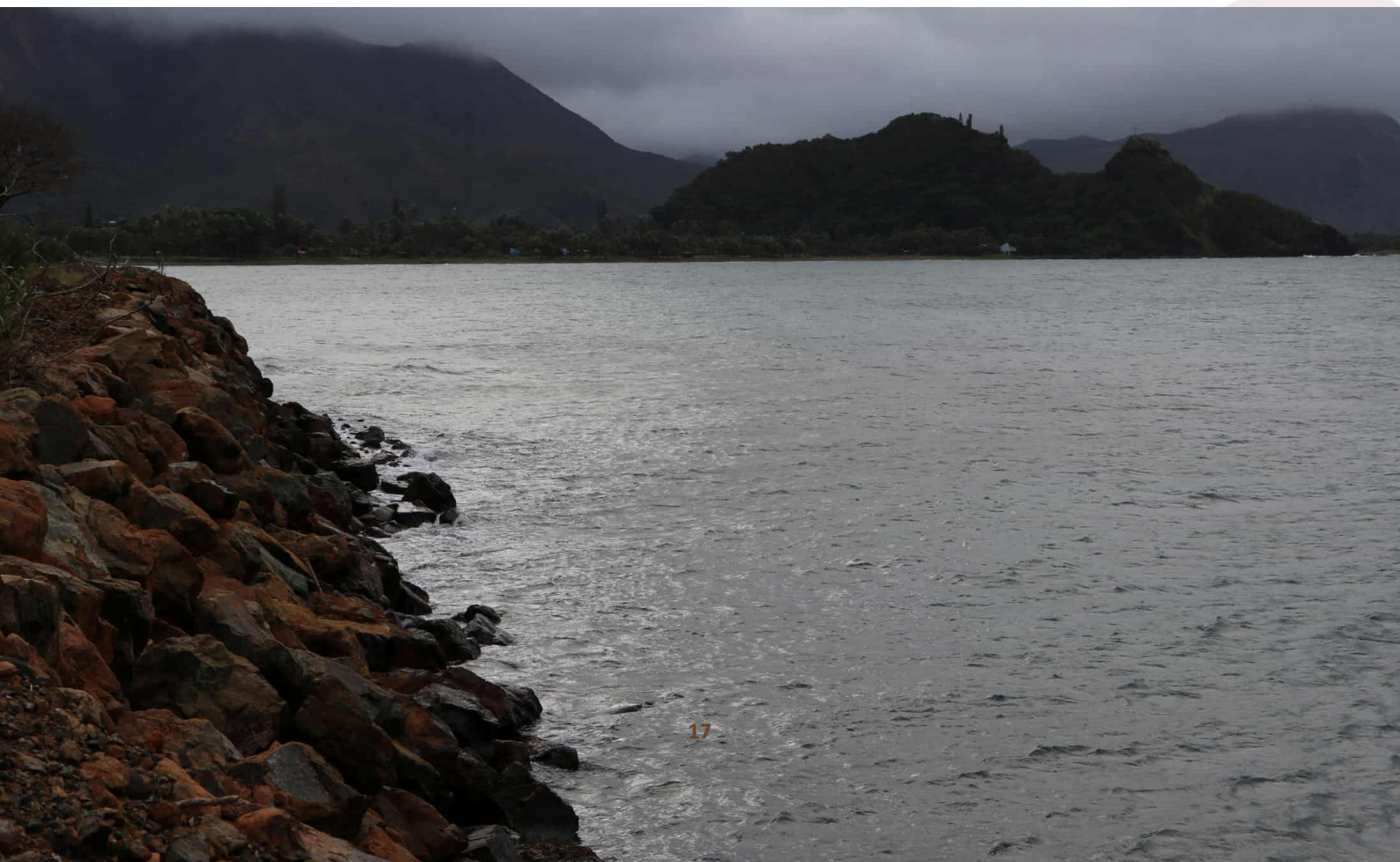
The customary tenure system stands in stark contrast to the French land tenure framework. Customary land claims date back several decades, but as one chief told the Mission, 'The percentage [of customary land] does not shift for Kanaky today, it is very hard to move because we have to deal with two types of law: French common law and customary law. We have to find the balance, but French common law is being privileged above customary law.' Several chiefs emphasised that the only way to increase their administration over land significantly is through independence, which would allow them to reform land laws. They see the need to recover the vast majority of the land, stating, 'There is still 80% to recover.'

Internal Tensions and Development

The process of land restitution, which has incrementally returned some land to the Kanak people since the 1980s, has also created internal challenges. While the intention was to rectify past injustices, the French administration's practice of returning land to 'groups of clans' rather than to specific clans has led to internal disputes. A chief explained, 'When you give to a group of clans like this, sometimes internal tensions arise from that.' This is another illustration of the colonial disregard for the need for considered reversals of historical injustices rendered on the Kanak people and their land.

Furthermore, the chiefs acknowledged that the development of the recovered land has been slow. A key factor has been the absence of available finance to develop customary lands. Other factors include localised inter-clan conflicts resulting from the previously mentioned clumsy colonial implementation of the Accords' promised land returns, as well as a lack of resources to support the restored authority of chiefs in these processes. The Customary Senate is now working to 'rehabilitate the role of the chiefs' and provide them with the means to manage and develop their land. As one chief explained, 'If the chiefs and the clans have the means, they can develop land.'

This case study illustrates the intricate connection between land, identity, and political autonomy for the Kanak people. The struggle is not just for ownership but for the preservation of a way of life that has been challenged for generations. Their path forward depends on their ability to regain control of Kanak land and empower traditional leadership to ensure a sustainable future for their youth.



II. Education and Cultural

Education, a critical component of which is the teaching of the Kanak language and culture, is fundamentally intertwined with the Kanak struggle for independence. Transforming colonial education systems has been a key consideration in pre-Accord protests, during negotiations with French authorities and indeed the Matignon and Noumea Accords. Whilst the relevant provisions within the respective Accords could, at face value, easily be interpreted as being in the best interest of advancing Kanak education, the Mission heard that the overall impact of these provisions does not support the vision of Kanak sovereignty and of independence but rather the entrenchment of Kanak participation in the lower tiers of a colonial economy. To paraphrase the words of a Kanak mother, 'the education system is designed to provide workers for the mining industry'.

According to a tribal elder, the Accords were given the status of 'saviour' and the role of completing the self-determination process. However, perhaps in the interest of development and the economy, the movement lost its focus on the decolonisation aspiration, with the main casualties being language, culture and identity.

Provisions allowing greater autonomy for pre-school and primary school curricula, as well as the teaching of indigenous Kanak languages in both primary and secondary schools, are acknowledged. Additionally, their recognition and inclusion as languages of instruction are acknowledged.

Students are nevertheless channelled into a secondary and tertiary school system of the French state, with its own higher education qualification requirements and employment priorities. Indigenous language learning has limited support throughout the schooling cycle, with pre-school learning transitioning to a French education system. In this system, 'foreign language learning' prioritises English or Spanish, but not Kanak languages. Ultimately, the education system is tailored to a French aspiration rather than an independent Kanak vision. This is especially true in the Southern Province, where the education system is closely tied to the loyalist political vision of remaining within the French dominion.

To aid the transfer of competencies espoused in the Accords, targeted initiatives such as the 'Cadre Avenir' training system were implemented to help raise Kanak education levels. The Mission heard, however, that other provisions seeking to advance a common identity for all 'New Caledonians' (Noumea Accord) effectively negated the prioritisation of Kanak education. Moreover, while the cadres' initiative opened opportunities for training in other Pacific Island jurisdictions, France has continued to ensure that competency development occurs through Paris, thereby actively blocking subregional and regional engagement.



Other challenges impacting Kanak education priorities include:

1. incompatibility of the formal education system with Kanak cultural learning due to the predominant use of the French language, non-recognition of Kanak custom educators because they lack appropriate [French-recognised] qualifications, and the comparatively greater time Kanak children spend in formal education as opposed to socialisation within family, tribal and customary settings;
2. an increased risk of language loss, and along with that, the loss of culture;
3. the 'funnelling' of Kanak children into a French education system oriented towards France, and with French instead of Kanak priorities that work to enhance admiration for and identification with a French-oriented model of the country's future;
 - a. For example, the baccalaureate, a standardised French high school qualification required to enter university, impedes Kanak students' progress in most fields. The Mission was informed that Kanak students are often encouraged into 'technical' training streams, rather than academic or scientific fields. This practice effectively limits their career trajectories and perpetuates economic inequality, making the baccalaureate system a tool that funnels Kanak students into lower-paid jobs, rather than serving as an equal pathway to a wide range of academic pursuits.
4. The challenge of decolonising education within a colonial system
5. There is a failure to produce qualified Kanak in various sectors to run the country.

The 13th May uprising had additional and profound impacts on families facing a severe economic slump, marked by widespread job losses and significant financial difficulties for children's education. The Mission was informed that many Kanak students cannot afford more than one meal a day, and bus fares have increased since the May uprising. For instance, the Mission heard from all interviewed that bus fares doubled following the May uprising, from about 250XPF per single trip to 500XPF, with many students and workers in the outskirts of Noumea needing to take two buses to get to school, costing 2000XPF (US\$20) in return journeys per day per person. The lack of adequate food, clothing, and supplies has, in turn, become a considerable impediment to continuing their education. This situation has been further compounded by the introduction of scholarship qualification requirements earlier this year, which appear to impact Kanak students in the Southern province disproportionately. This is discussed further under the section on 'collective punishment' below.

Aside from prolonged school closures, the violence and deaths occurring in proximity to families and communities caused deep and widespread trauma to residents in the most-affected neighbourhoods and communities, especially the youth and children. The Mission has heard that, as of April 2025, the education department has failed to address trauma and foster healing among school children adequately. Counselling services are only offered on a 1-on-1 basis, which is both insufficient to meet the numbers and inappropriate in relation to the need for communal/collective trauma healing.

III. Health

Over 10,000 people (4% of the population) left the country following the May 2024 uprising. These included a significant number of medical professionals and healthcare workers, who, according to the French Medical Association of New Caledonia, were estimated to be around '... 20% of the 1000 doctors locally registered in February 2024.'^[6] The resulting shortage of medical staff led to the temporary closure of the Northern Province hospital's emergency services, affecting the northern and eastern coasts. Hospitals in Nouméa also reportedly suspended services.

For several years, the healthcare sector has faced a shortage of doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, midwives, dental surgeons, and other specialists, which has severely impacted the quality of healthcare. The situation remains critical; by March 22, 2025,^[7] the government had reportedly received only 46 applications for its health reserve initiative, which is still insufficient to meet the growing needs.

Here again, the Mission observed the lagging development of local competencies, particularly among the Kanak, in the medical profession, despite improvements in the field of nursing. While the uprising triggered a medical crisis, the severity of the impact on healthcare delivery is an indictment of the implementation of relevant provisions of the Accords, including those aimed at improving Kanak access to education and employment, particularly in the medical and other technical professions.

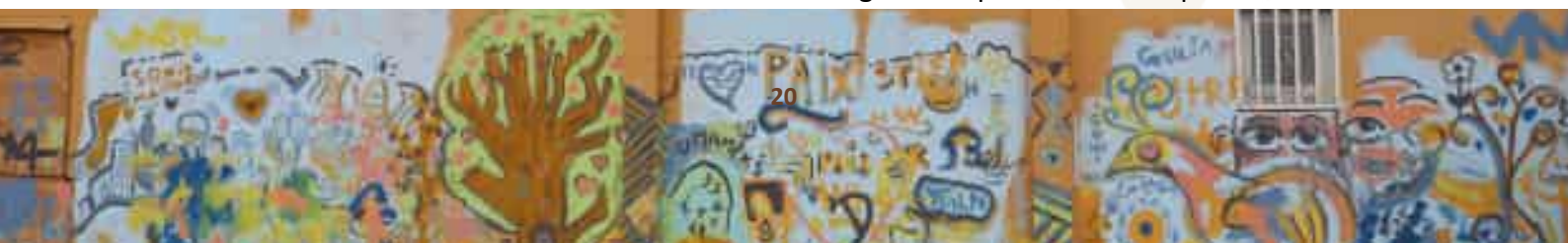
IV. Economic Challenges

The economy of Kanaky New Caledonia revolves around mining, the public service, and tourism, and it has been the case for some considerable time. The Mission heard that there has been minimal effort to diversify the economic base and capitalise on agriculture, fisheries and other sectors that could enhance the participation of the Kanak, Oceanian and other resident populations.

Following the unrest and crisis in May 2024, analysts have raised serious concerns about the territory's worsening economic situation. The uprising and its aftermath destroyed 800 businesses, resulting in the loss of more than 20,000 jobs,^[8] and an estimated cost of €2.2 billion. Recovery efforts may require an additional €4.2 billion in aid, perpetuating dependence on Paris.

This dependency is compounded by political instability in France; the collapse of Prime Minister Michel Barnier's government^[9] further delayed crucial financial support and political discussions regarding New Caledonia's future. The uncertainty surrounding the stability of both the French government and the New Caledonian political landscape raises concerns that the economic and social consequences of this crisis could spiral out of control without decisive intervention.

Kanaky New Caledonia's economy has long been heavily dependent on its nickel industry, particularly in exports to China, Korea, and Japan, which comprise a significant portion of its export trade.





However, falling nickel prices, the destruction of infrastructure, and widespread business closures have severely impacted revenue. The crisis deepened with the closure of several key nickel plants, including the KNS plant,^[10] resulting in significant job and revenue losses. The shutdown of the Koniambo nickel plant in the North Province—where nickel accounts for 20% of GDP and 90% of exports—has further exacerbated the crisis.

Despite proposed government bailouts, the sector remains unstable, and recovery efforts have stalled, leaving public sector employees uncertain about their salaries and private businesses struggling to survive. Kanaky New Caledonia's economic future is uncertain with falling nickel prices and rising production costs. Additionally, the crisis has widened the economic divide between the pro-independence North and the wealthier South, further complicating the country's challenges in both economic recovery and its push for self-determination, which is at odds with the objectives of the Accords.

According to updates in January 2025,^[11] one in five employees has lost part or all of their income since May 2024, and many businesses are still struggling to recover. As of January 2025, 5,850 of the 11,100 employees who lost their jobs since March 2024 are still fully unemployed. Business creation remains sluggish, but for the first time since March 2024, the number of self-employed worker registrations has exceeded deregistration. This suggests that some individuals are turning to entrepreneurship and creating their own jobs.

The economic crisis in New Caledonia has severely impacted the poorest families, making it increasingly difficult for them to survive. Rising unemployment and inflation have added additional financial strain, leading many families to rely on charity support. Since May 2024, around 20% of employees have lost part or all of their income, and more than 5,000 individuals have been excluded from aid programs.

The Mission identified the contradiction and unfairness in the policy that states nickel development should benefit all citizens of Kanaky New Caledonia, not just the Kanak. In reality, this has led to increased economic disparity and ongoing poor economic conditions for the Kanak population. To paraphrase the concerns of Kanak landowners, 'after more than a hundred years of mining our nickel resources, we still have pot-holes on our roads, and the most likely career of our youth is to work in the mines.' Apart from the substantive percentage of nickel revenues syphoned out by the mining companies, the customary resource owners have been subsidising the growth and development of others. They do not receive an equity share in the resource extracted from their land; instead, they receive a small portion from the budget allocated to their district for development purposes. The Mission was informed that this was a key reason for the forced closure of mining operations in 2024.



V. Employment

The Accords prioritise rebalancing employment inequalities. However, the Mission heard that the past 40 years—the Accord years—have failed to address these inequalities, with the steady decline in the number of Kanak in formal employment from 1998 to the present being a prime example.

Aside from the decline in numbers, the Mission also heard that the implementation of the Accords also fell short in rebalancing Kanak access to high-level positions and/or capacities and responsibilities in the work arena. As highlighted above, the shortage of medical and healthcare professionals, along with injustices in the education sector, impede access to employment.

The fact that, up to 2024, there has only ever been one Kanak Commissioner of Police also bears witness to this. He was also suspended from the position last year, allegedly for choosing to remain impartial in the conduct of his duties during the uprising and for lodging an internal investigation into the off-duty policeman shooting of a youth in Paita. According to the Union Syndicate des Travailleurs Kanak et des Exploités – USTKE, this is unfortunately reflective of ongoing discrimination and racism against Kanak, either already in the workforce or striving to get in.

A further example of workplace harassment with racial overtones involved the intentional leaking of the names of Kanak police officers from neighbourhoods implicated in the uprising of May 2024.

VI. Public Infrastructure

The Mission heard that the development and evolution of Noumea as an urban centre has strong elements of racial segregation, where neighbourhoods and communities are roughly divided along ethnicity, social and economic status. The design of residential areas, particularly the clear separation of 'social' housing projects from more affluent residential areas, makes for a stark contrast between predominantly 'White' and predominantly 'coloured' sides of Noumea. Apparently, until very recently, there were entertainment establishments in popular 'White' locales into which Kanak were not allowed access.

The Mission observed that the urban design and planning of Noumea township have reinforced socio-spatial segregation, with Kanak communities largely confined to specific areas, while other neighbourhoods are dominated by non-Kanak populations, rendering Kanak peoples unwelcome in those spaces. Some Kanak youth described the urban construct as racial segregation. They recounted an incident of 2012, where some Kanak youth were turned away from an entertainment establishment in the predominantly White section of Noumea. They added that this has been a common occurrence for most Kanak, who have observed that there is an unspoken preference for other ethnic groups (French, Tahitians, Wallisians and Futunans). The urban settings of Noumea also disadvantage Kanak from operating commercial businesses and or engaging in business opportunities. The Mission was informed that Kanak, who wished to operate commercial businesses in the area, had to undergo stringent processes to secure

business licenses. Furthermore, Kanak, who operated in the area, faced discrimination.

During consultations, communities repeatedly reported concerns about social housing, specifically its access, location, and rising costs. They consistently told the Mission about their vision for Nouméa to become an Oceanian city, planned and organised in a way that fosters inter-group connection and social cohesion. This vision, some noted, stands in direct opposition to the current model of tower-based social housing, which they view as replicating the segregated cities of metropolitan France and being the antithesis to a Kanak and Oceanian way of life. The strong and repeated desire expressed to the Mission was for more spaces that facilitate social gatherings and greater integration among different communities.

Equitable accessibility of public infrastructure was a common concern raised with the Mission by the Kanak peoples. The Mission learned that many Kanak communities were concerned about the decision to relocate the domestic airport from Magenta in central Noumea to Tontouta, over an hour's drive away. Apparently prompted following the May 2024 uprising to consolidate aviation services, the airport relocation impacts local businesses in the Magenta catchment, increasing transport costs for Kanak populations travelling between the Loyalty Islands and Noumea.

VII. Criminal Justice System and Human Rights

In Kanaky New Caledonia, political groups and human rights organisations have raised concerns about what they perceive as a double standard in the criminal justice system, particularly in the aftermath of the May 2024 uprising. The system is perceived as applying laws and consequences 'subjectively,' often to the disadvantage of Kanak. The perception of a double standard stems from how French authorities handled legal cases involving Kanak individuals and those of French descent, especially during the 2024 uprising.

A powerful example of this double standard is the case of the sole Kanak Police Commissioner. After the May 2024 uprising, he was suspended for two years for initiating a disciplinary investigation against an off-duty French police officer who shot and killed a Kanak youth. While the French officer was reportedly transferred to Tahiti, the Kanak commissioner was suspended, with his future to be decided by the French Minister of the Interior. This case, as shared by the Kanak trade union, symbolises unequal treatment:

'The French justice system is an instrument of a colonial policy of repression. It is a one-sided justice. This is not justice. The police officer who killed a young Kanak man is transferred to Tahiti. The Kanak police commissioner, who simply did his job, who followed the procedure, is suspended for two years.

The double standard extends to broader human rights violations. The Mission was told that the uprising led to what many are

calling a collective punishment of the Kanak community, with a security-focused response that prioritised repression over reconciliation.

There are multiple reports of arbitrary arrests, detentions, and brutality by law enforcement and security forces since the 13 May uprising, as well as before it. Accusations of excessive force and violence by both police and civilian militias have been common. In August 2024, a statement on New Caledonia by the United Nations human rights rapporteurs, issued by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights,^[12] highlighted the issue of police violence: 'We are very concerned by the absence of dialogue, the excessive use of force, the ongoing deployment of military forces and the continued reports of human rights violations that have targeted thousands of Kanak Indigenous People.'

The UN statement notes: 'We are very concerned by the absence of dialogue, the excessive use of force, the ongoing deployment of military forces and the continued reports of human rights violations that have targeted thousands of Kanak Indigenous People. We are aware that some acts of violence, as well as damage to private and public property, were committed by certain demonstrators. However, the response means used, their intensity and repressive nature, the seriousness of the violence reported, the racist and racially discriminatory nature of certain acts of violence, as well as the number of deaths, injuries, arbitrary arrests, detentions and enforced disappearances are alarming.'

The Mission heard how pro-independence leaders and activists have been charged with what their supporters describe as politically motivated or 'trumped-up' charges. Some of these leaders were transferred by military aircraft to prisons spread across mainland France, a practice viewed as political deportation, to remove influential figures from the local political scene.

The Mission was told that the legal process for many Kanak youths arrested during the uprising was criticised for being too fast. The Mission heard that expedited sentencing was conducted with impunity, often limiting their access to legal counsel and proper defence. This is especially concerning, given that as of 2024, there have yet to be any Kanak judges serving in the judicial system, further demonstrating a lack of cultural and social representation in the system meant to serve them.

The Mission were told that the mass arrests led to a severe overpopulation of prisons. The main prison in Noumea, Camp Est, has a capacity for around 400 inmates, but its population has increased significantly,

leading to inhumane conditions. This overpopulation crisis was a pre-existing issue, but was exacerbated by the arrests following the May 2024 events. The Mission was told that the number of inmates exceeded the prison's capacity by 150% in May 2024. The prison population in Kanaky New Caledonia, is disproportionately Kanak, with some reports citing that over 90% of inmates are indigenous Kanak, a figure that has remained alarmingly high since the 1980s. The Unions have consistently raised this issue, noting that in the late 1990s, the prison population was already 74% Kanak. The recent arrests have only worsened this imbalance, fuelling the youth's mistrust in a system they believe is designed to oppress them.

The Mission was repeatedly confronted with a profound sense of distrust in the French state's role in Kanaky New Caledonia's decolonisation process. This scepticism, articulated by Kanak representatives, is rooted in the belief that France is not a neutral arbiter but a key actor in perpetuating the conflict. As one speaker said, 'France is acting like a referee, but instead they are the main perpetrator.'



The sentiment is that France, rather than facilitating a genuine and peaceful path to self-determination, is actively working to maintain control over the territory's resources. A Union representative highlighted this with a cutting assessment, 'France does not know how to decolonise.' This statement implies that the Kanak observe France's ongoing failure to learn from past colonial experiences and a continued reliance on strategies that benefit France at the expense of the indigenous population.

The deep-seated frustration stemming from these perceived injustices has reached a breaking point, particularly among the younger generation. The youth, who feel abandoned by a French-led system that has failed to address social and economic inequalities, have become a radicalised force in the movement. A Union speaker noted the stark shift in their approach, explaining that, sadly, Kanak youth 'are not afraid to die.' This stark reality underscores the desperation and conviction of a generation that sees no future in a French-led process and is prepared to sacrifice everything for independence. This perspective reveals a profound and dangerous chasm between the older, more politically engaged Kanak generation and a Kanak youth cohort that is disillusioned with diplomatic solutions.

VIII. Media

The ongoing crisis is significantly impacting the media and communication sector, with national media and broadcasting industries feeling the strain. Caledonia TV, a key local broadcaster since 2013, is facing closure due to severe budget cuts following last year's civil unrest.

The Northern Province, its main financial backer, approved only a fraction of the requested funding for 2025. As a result, Caledonia TV's staff, around 30 people, is grappling with the threat of shutdown after December 2025.^[13] The channel, which competes with the state-funded Nouvelle-Calédonie la Première and has been a crucial source of local news and current affairs.

Its closure would be a significant blow to the media landscape in New Caledonia, following the termination of the print edition of the leading daily newspaper, Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes, in 2023. The Press Club has warned that losing such a vital source of local information would undermine democracy and the quality of public discourse in the region.

IX. Collective Punishment

The Mission was particularly concerned about the emergence of a politics of revenge with the imposition of what has been termed by those we met as 'collective punishment' of Kanak communities by the state and loyalist authorities. Collective punitive action by the loyalist Southern Provincial government targeted Noumea neighbourhoods, such as Vallee du Tir, Montravel, Dumbea, St. Luis, Paita, and municipalities like Thio, for their participation in the so-called May 2024 'riots'.



Case Study: Education

Earlier this year, the Southern Province established new criteria for student scholarships, limiting recipients to those with a minimum of 10 years of residency (previously 6 years). While the provincial government defends budget cuts as a response to the current economic crisis, parents' and teachers' associations, along with other affected groups, consider this a form of collective punishment targeting neighbourhood groups whose members may have participated in the May 2024 uprising. The new requirement had the immediate effect of disqualifying up to 350 students and disproportionately affecting Kanak communities. A significant portion of those disqualified have moved in from other provinces and stayed with relatives, and therefore, are not considered residents. Moreover, implementing the policy entails accessing and using personal information/data on demography and location from school rolls, electoral records and utility bills. Most-impacted families and groups consider this a denial of the right to education and a form of segregation, implicating not just education but also public transportation and housing.



Case Study: Transportation

Collective punishment has also been meted out on targeted neighbourhoods through limitations on public transportation. The Mission heard that bus services have been cut to just morning runs and an unaffordable bus fare hike (500 CFP Pacific francs per trip). When combined with the impact of the aforementioned transportation cutbacks resulting from the new scholarship qualification requirements, commuters, including workers and students, are now spending unsustainable amounts on alternative transportation.



Case study: Economy – Thio mine closure and repercussions

The municipality of Thio (in the north-eastern coastal region of the Southern Province) hosts several mining sites, including the country's largest and most valuable nickel mine. During the May 2024 uprising, all of Thio's mining operations were forcibly shut down by local youth in solidarity with the youth actions in Noumea and following the shooting of the first unarmed Kanak youth. The Mission heard that in response to the cessation of Thio's nickel revenues to the Southern Province's coffers, the loyalist provincial government has decided to penalise the municipality by closing the local primary school, municipal sports facility, and health centre. These services/facilities will be relocated to the neighbouring Bouloupari municipality on the western coast, necessitating a lengthy commute for impacted communities in Thio, including students and those needing medical care.

KANAK WOMEN



Women leaders in Kanaky played a central role in brokering peace in the aftermath of the May 2024 uprising. Mothers, aunties, and sisters were in direct contact with the youth on the frontlines and were the first voices of peace to be heard within communities. The Mission heard numerous accounts of personal courage and sacrifice by women throughout the uprising, such as crossing blockades, sharing food, and brokering peace. One such collective is Solidarité presqu'île de Ducos, a family-initiated, inter-faith (Église Coeur de Jesus) and now community-wide food assistance program that ensures unemployed families, single-headed households and those living in squats have access to food every week (Box 3).

A common theme voiced to the Mission was that 'it was the mothers and youth who reorganised life in the multi-cultural neighbourhoods after May 2024, reunifying fractured groups and fostering community resilience'. Due to the gendarme blockades and travel restrictions, many supported community resilience through 'solidarity movements and collectives' that were neighbourhood-specific.

A women's solidarity movement that began before the May 2024 uprising was La Natte Kanak (Kanak Mats) group, which was established in 2016 to revive traditional mat weaving.



Responding to a decision by the Senat Coutumier to revive the use of traditional mats in place of store-bought items (calico, sugar, rice, etc) for formal ceremonies and 'la geste', a group of women from the Hoot Ma Whap customary area of Province du Nord began the slow, steady work of cultural revival of women's traditional crafts. The group quickly realised that cultural revival depended on the availability of the key traditional ecological material - pandanus. 'To protect our culture, we have to plant pandanus', the Mission was told, 'And it is more than cultural protection, it also supports livelihoods for women weavers.' However, with limited access to tribal land, growing pandanus is a new frontier for Kanak women to overcome.

Mami Danguinuy collaborated with a local technical college to introduce a certification in Kanak weaving culture, aiming to promote and preserve traditional knowledge and practices. 'We must know more than just how to weave or plant pandanus; we also need to know the history of mats and what they mean for Kanak identity', she said.

'We must know more than just how to weave or plant pandanus; we also need to know the history of mats and what they mean for Kanak identity', she said. As part of efforts to revalorise the traditional arts, La Natte Kanak has successfully fundraised XPF 3 million (approximately US\$30,000) from the Nickel Society, the GoNC, and member donations to conduct a first-ever KNC-wide pandanus survey and re-planting program led by Kanak students. 'This is a social, economic and environmental project', the Mission was told, 'This is how we protect our culture and identity.'

Two other community-based associations that played an essential role in community support services throughout the May 2024 uprising and since are Cries et Pleurs des Femmes Association (CPFA) and the SDF Association. CPFA was formed following a tragic murder-suicide in a domestic violence situation, and particularly serves Oceanian communities to provide refuge to victims of violence. The SDF - Sans domicile fixe- Association assists homeless people in finding safe shelter.

'We must know more than just how to weave or plant pandanus; we also need to know the history of mats and what they mean for Kanak identity'



Box 3: on Solidarité presqu'île de Ducos

Following the Kanak uprising in May 2024, the Mission observed that women played a pivotal leadership role both during and in the aftermath of the uprising. Their efforts were particularly crucial.

The food distribution initiative spearheaded by the Solidarité presqu'île de Ducos group, which is composed primarily of young people, is implemented in collaboration with local churches in Kanaky and the GoNC-sponsored Banque Alimentaire (Food Bank). This project is led by Yaelle Saihuliwa, who is also its founder. She shared with the mission team the significant challenges encountered when engaging with authorities, particularly the difficulties in lobbying for food supplies, the multiple challenges encountered with the French security forces and the team's attempts to distribute food packages during and after the heavily militarised crisis.

Despite these setbacks, her commitment to the project remained unwavering. She emphasised that beyond the fear generated by the heavy presence of armed military forces in the neighbourhoods and reports of extrajudicial killings, families were left without access to essential goods and basic necessities. Her leadership and resilience underscore the critical role women continue to play in community response and recovery efforts in times of crisis.

KANAK YOUTH

Kanak youth remain the most severely affected by growing socio-economic inequalities. The Mission heard that even before May 2024, a whole generation of youth had been deeply impacted by the loss of their language, and as a result, dislocated from their culture, place, spirituality, philosophy, and practices that could otherwise equip them with the life skills to cope with today's realities. These youth are therefore disconnected from their identity and belonging as Kanak. This is seen as part of the reason for their unease and participation in the uprising.

For their part in the uprising, thousands were arrested, serving rapidly delivered sentences in overcrowded conditions that do not meet international human rights standards. Many have been transferred offshore without their families' knowledge of their whereabouts. Communities shared their concerns with the Mission about the lack of justice, transparency and communication with families about the fate of their youth.

The Mission was informed that, before the May 2024 uprising, the proportion of Kanak in prison had declined from 65% in 1996, to 30% in 1998, and to 15% in 2018. Yet post-May 2024, Kanak youth account for >80% of the prison population. The Noumea prison was reportedly designed to hold 300 inmates; however, following May 2024, it housed around 600, with more than 50 transferred to metropolitan France as part of an 'institutional mechanism,' often without their families' knowledge. At the time of the Mission, it was estimated that 400 prisoners remained in the 300-space Noumea prison.

The Mission heard a powerful and resonant sentiment: 'the youth of today are not afraid to die,' echoing the unwavering resolve of their parents' generation during the tumultuous events of the 1980s. Many of the elders and community leaders the Mission met emphasised their concern that another youth uprising could occur if the deepening socio-economic inequalities were not addressed.



KANAK RESILIENCE



Understanding the resilience of the Kanak people also entails recognising the sustained efforts to address a deep power imbalance in the struggle for independence. The Mission was reminded that France's colonisation of Kanaky New Caledonia, has been a particularly brutal and lengthy colonial project in the Pacific. Against this background, and despite strains on solidarity and France's unwillingness to decolonise, the independence movement remains intact and active, as described in the section on 'Political Dimensions' above.

Aside from the enduring willingness to engage French and loyalist parties to the Accords at the institutional level,

Kanak resilience is also clearly manifested within the movement, especially in the desire and ability of ordinary people, associations, collectives, and other grassroots groups to self-organise in building solidarity, responding to crises, reconciling, and supporting each other in extreme circumstances.

The Mission observed first-hand the extraordinary resilience of Kanak communities, which, in the aftermath of the May 2024 uprising, mobilised to address critical social and economic needs. This grassroots response highlighted a powerful commitment by Kanak peoples to mutual support, healing, and cultural reconnection for their homeland.



I. Education and Youth Engagement

The Mission was told about the crucial role of parents' and teachers' associations established before and after the May 13 events. A prime example was a donation drive held on March 22, 2025, at Jules-Garnier High School. This initiative was organised to provide food, school supplies, and clothing to around 50 students whose families were struggling financially due to the ongoing crisis. The collective, which was formed by teachers in 2023, has a pre-existing system, including an internal recycling centre, to assist students in need.

Beyond formal education, the Mission saw how youth and women's groups, including artists, lead programs that use music, drama, and other art forms to facilitate holistic learning, healing, and reconciliation. Additionally, local associations have focused on providing Kanak language training, a vital tool for reconnecting a generation of disaffected youth with their culture, place, identity, and sense of belonging. This work is essential for encouraging them to assume greater responsibility for the future of a sovereign country.

II. Arts and Music as Tools for Healing

The mission heard that many youths were experiencing fear, distress, and isolation, often choosing to stay indoors due to this trauma. In response, a few neighbourhood youths developed a healing initiative centred around music, art workshops and dance. They used these forms of expression to cope with their trauma and encourage others to come out of hiding.

III. Health and Well-being

Grassroots collectives, including parents' and teachers' associations, have also provided much-needed trauma counselling in schools and neighbourhoods. They use collective/communal processes similar to Kanak methods of family and social interaction, characterised by caring for and supporting one another. They ensure that support is provided to the people, particularly in the areas inhabited by Kanak people, such as church communities and among neighbours. The Mission learned that this community-led approach to mental health and peacebuilding is helping people cope with the psychological impact of the uprising.



IV. Food and Economic Security

The Mission was informed about the powerful solidarity that emerged to address food and economic insecurity. This took the form of solidarity kitchens and food redistribution initiatives. Women's groups established food gardens on tribal lands to ensure a consistent supply of fresh produce. A profoundly moving account was shared about food and produce being sent from other islands to Nouméa, where it was distributed to Kanak neighbourhoods. The Mission heard a detailed description of this process, including the sight of food being offloaded at the wharf and distributed under French armed gendarmerie, a testament to the commitment and danger involved in these acts of solidarity.

To address the economic fallout from the destruction of commercial centres, communities established solidarity markets and canteens to provide access to basic goods. The solidarity market at Rivière Salée, held every Saturday, was described as a key initiative to reunite the multi-cultural neighbourhood after the events of May 2024. Organisers told the Mission that the market provided a space for people to earn a small income and was open to everyone, including Kanak, Wallisians, ni-Vanuatuan, Vietnamese, Tahitians, Futunans, and Indonesians. The mission heard that the core goal of the market was to help people come together and feel safe again.



MISSION RECOMMENDATIONS



The Mission recommends the following:

Negotiation of new institutional arrangements to replace the Noumea Accords:

1. Allow the return of Kanak leaders to Kanaky New Caledonia, including FLNKS President Christian Tein, who have since been released from jails across France.
2. The holding of Provincial elections at the earliest possible date.
3. Respect Kanak societal cycles and priorities, which include the need to address overdue rebalancing targets (land, education, employment, economy, etc.), unresolved injustices (arbitrary arrests/detention, and incarceration of political prisoners, including those still in metropolitan France), and other human rights violations.

Regional opportunities (with the Melanesian Spearhead Group and Pacific Islands Forum, respective Pacific Islands Governments, as well as the regional and national civil society sectors)

1. ensure a neutral mediation capacity to accompany the decolonisation process and be observed by Pacific and international experts;
2. facilitate early neutral accompaniment to develop Kanak competencies;
3. cooperative arrangements for defence and security under Pacific and international scrutiny;
4. revitalise the solidarity movement within the Region in support of Kanaky New Caledonia and strengthen the connection/proximity among the Pacific peoples.
5. strengthen people-to-people, including women and youth, exchanges within the region, across multiple platforms (collaboration, visits, cultural and educational exchanges, training, participation in regional meetings, etc);
6. ensure that Kanaky New Caledonia remains on the UN decolonisation list of Non-Self-Governing Territories and that the self-determination aspirations of Kanaky New Caledonia remain an urgent priority for Pacific Leaders, individually and in the regional agenda of the MSG and PIF.



PACIFIC SOLIDARITY/ REGIONAL RESPONSIBILITY



Pacific Solidarity/ Regional Responsibility

At the regional level, the Mission recommends that efforts are needed to:

1. Revitalise the solidarity movement within the Region to support Kanaky and strengthen the connection/proximity among Pacific peoples.
2. Support from the Pacific networks to facilitate people-to-people (youth) exchanges within the region, across multiple platforms (collaboration, visits, cultural and educational exchanges, training, participation in regional meetings, etc.), to reaffirm solidarity with Kanak peoples and regional support for self-determination.
3. Develop more English-language resources about current developments to share with Anglophone communities across the region.



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ANNEXES

Annex 1 Background

Colonisation and Early Struggles

In 1853, France annexed the islands now known as Kanaky New Caledonia and began a colonial legacy characterised by the displacement, marginalisation, persecution and racial discrimination of/against the indigenous population - the Kanak. As with other colonised peoples, the forceful and often violent dispossession of the Kanak people from tribal lands to cater for settlers, agriculture, mining and other colonial priorities set the tone for the dislocation of local populations, from place, kastom and economy. The relegation of Kanak to a lesser social status in their own land, the denial of their civil rights, and their exclusion from public and political life were formalised by France's 'Code de l'indigénat'^[1] (Indigenous Code) in 1887. This period of oppression and racial discrimination was further symbolised by the 1931 Paris Colonial Exhibition,^[15] where Kanak people were displayed in cages as exotic objects.

France also used Kanaky New Caledonia as a penal colony, with over 21,000 convicts, including political prisoners from France, being sent there from 1864 to 1897. The discovery of nickel in 1864 birthed a mining industry that remains a cornerstone of France's colonial presence and longer-term interest in Kanaky New Caledonia today.

Estimates of the pre-colonial Kanak population ranged from '...between 50,000 to well over 100,000.'^[16] By 1900, numbers fell below 28,000 as a result of diseases introduced by Europeans, but also as a direct result of executions by colonial agents. Even though numbers began to rise again from the 1930s, reaching around 100,000 by the turn of the century, they had by then become a minority in their own land. Demographic dynamics have thus remained central to the Kanak struggle for independence.

Post-World War II changes

The establishment of the United Nations (UN) in 1946 heralded important milestones for decolonisation. Aside from the UN Charter (1946), the UN adopted several resolutions that set new international norms, favouring the self-determination of all nations and obligating colonial powers to fulfil certain responsibilities in advancing this decolonisation agenda. The UN General Assembly Resolution 15/14 (XV)^[17] (December 14, 1960) establishing the right to self-determination for all colonial peoples was a key example. New Caledonia was, however, only briefly listed as a non-self-governing territory by the United Nations between 1946 and 1947,^[18] and discussions about independence remained off-limits.

In 1946, New Caledonia became a French overseas territory,^[19] granting Kanak citizenship in the French Republic and the right to vote. Voting rights were, however, consistently diluted by France's attempts to manipulate demographic dynamics to its advantage. Civil liberties were curtailed in other ways, such as limitations on Kanak freedom of movement (kept in the tribus (tribal reserves) 'reserves' or relocated in the interest of economic growth), and access to and/or ownership of land, much of which (over 70%) remains in 'state' hands or private interests today.

Kanak resistance and resilience under French colonial rule

The Kanak resistance to colonial rule has persisted since 1853; the ideas of a unique Kanak identity and a sovereign Kanak people have remained alive. Notable escalations include the Kanak Revolt^[20] in 1878, when High Chief Ataï of La Foa united numerous central tribes and launched a guerrilla war against French colonial rule, resulting in the deaths of an estimated 1,000 Kanak and 200 settlers. In 1917, in the midst of the First World War, where Kanak and Tahitians were fighting in France, Chief Noel led another revolt against French rule. Resistance also surged in the 1970s-80s, culminating in the uprisings from 1984 to 1988, euphemised as 'Les Evenements' (the events), which ended with the 'Ouvea massacre' (1988)^[21], where 19 Kanak and 2 French troopers were killed.

The resilience of the vision for an independent Kanaky New Caledonia also crystallised in the formation of the Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste (FLNKS)^[22], or the Kanak and Socialist National Liberation Front, in 1984. This marked both the unification of pro-independence groups and their organisation into a political alliance, comprising various political parties primarily supported by the Kanak indigenous population but with support from other ethnic communities. At its founding in 1984, the FLNKS included a range of political parties and activist groups, including:

- Union Calédonienne (Caledonian Union - UC), a centre-left, historically multi-ethnic party
- The Parti de Libération Kanak (Party of Kanak Liberation - PALIKA), a radical left-wing party formed by students returning from France after the 1968 riots
- Front Uni de Liberation Kanak (United Front for Kanak Liberation – FULK)
- Union progressiste en Mélanésie (UPM)
- Parti-Socialiste de Kanaky (Socialist Party of Kanaky - PSK)
- Union Syndicale des Travailleurs Kanak et Exploités (the pro-Independence Confédération of Kanak and Exploited Workers Unions – USTKE)
- The feminist Groupe des Femmes Kanak et Exploitées en Lutte (Group of Kanak and Exploited Women in Struggle – GFKEL)

Over the years, some parties (FULK and PSK) have dissolved, while other new parties have developed (including the Parti Travailleiste – Labour Party PT). Today, UC and Palika are the largest parties at the heart of two parliamentary groups represented in the Congress of New Caledonia: UC-FLNKS et Nationalistes, and Union Nationale pour l'Indépendance (National Union for Independence - NI), which links Palika and UPM.

Annex 2 Key Institutional Arrangements

a. Matignon-Oudinot Accords (1988)

The Matignon-Oudinot Accords^[23] were intended to bring the violent clashes of the mid-1980s to an end, prevent further conflict, and promote reconciliation between the Kanak and European communities. They proposed an end to direct rule from Paris and set a roadmap for a vote on independence in 1998. This roadmap included provisions for the gradual transfer of power to the Kanak people, the creation of a shared governing framework, and a 10-year period of political and economic cooperation to ensure peace and stability in the region. The Accords were also intended to facilitate better representation of Kanak in political and institutional processes thus granting them greater autonomy within the French Republic.

b. Noumea Accord (1998)

The Nouméa Accord was signed on May 5, 1998,^[24] by the French government, FLNKS, and the conservative settler party RPCR, and approved through a referendum by 71.86% of New Caledonians. It is, in essence, a decolonisation plan setting out the gradual transfer of political power and institutional responsibilities from Paris to New Caledonia over 20 years. Key commitments in the Accord include:

- Changes to the French legislature to create a 'shared sovereignty' and a 'new citizenship' for people of Kanaky New Caledonia, which effectively end its status as a 'French overseas territory';
- New political institutions replacing the old Territorial Assembly, including three provincial assemblies, a national Congress, a multi-party government and a Kanak Customary Senate;
- Irreversible transfer of powers from France to local authorities, including the new Congress;
- Recognition of Kanak culture and identity; and
- Conduct of 3 independence referendums at the end of a 15–20-year transition period that would allow for possible 'emancipation'.

Even though contested by French authorities, the Noumea Accord also gave Kanaky New Caledonia the unique status as a 'country'.



c. Resolution Restoring New Caledonia to the UN Decolonisation List

In December 1986, the UN restored New Caledonia to the list of non-self-governing territories to be decolonised. Through Resolution 41/41/A,^[25] the UN General Assembly (UNGA) reaffirmed the inalienable right of the colonised people of Kanaky New Caledonia, to self-determination. The emphasis on the 'colonised people', which refers specifically to the indigenous people of the country - the Kanak— is intentional and offers a critical distinction not often acknowledged in current discourse. The Resolution is couched within the principles of the UN Charter and the UN decolonisation agenda, and it is amplified in the international decades dedicated to the eradication of colonialism, which began in 1990. The political and moral backing of the Pacific regional organisations for this institutional arrangement, the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), which led the lobby for the Resolution, and the Pacific Islands Forum, was a critical element of this outcome.

In 2020, the General Assembly adopted resolution 75/123 declaring the period 2021-2030 the Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. This resolution called upon Member States to intensify their efforts to continue implementing the plan of action for the Second International Decade (see A/56/61, annexe). It also called upon Member States to cooperate with the C-24 in updating the plan of action as necessary, with a view to using it as the basis for the Fourth International Decade.

During the 2021 opening session of the Special Committee on Decolonization on 18 February 2021, Ambassador Keisha McGuire, the incumbent Chair of the Committee, called on all the Member States to renew their commitment, and to strive to make this the last decade to be observed, referencing the General Assembly resolution of 2020 that declares the Fourth Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (2021–2030).



Annex 3 Mission Delegation

Anna Naupa (Head of Mission) is of Erromangan-English heritage, with her paternal ancestral links spanning the southern islands of Vanuatu, marked by traditional trade in navelah (fossilised clams), red ochre, and yams, particularly 'yam Maré' from the island of Maré in modern-day New Caledonia. A doctoral candidate at the Australian National University, Naupa is a thought leader on Pacific human and cultural security and geopolitics. With over 20 years of experience, she has held senior advisory and management roles at regional organisations, including the Pacific Fusion Centre and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. Her work includes producing strategic security assessments for Pacific Island countries and facilitating connections between Melanesian writers to promote cultural heritage. She holds master's degrees from the University of Hawai'i, Mānoa and Harvard University.



Dr David Small is a career academic and lawyer, specialising in the intersection of education and politics, with a focus on decolonisation. He taught and researched for many years at the University of Canterbury, critically analysing topics such as the neoliberal model of education and the role of education in the colonisation of New Zealand. He also holds a lawyer's practising certificate, has taught education law, and maintains an active interest in New Caledonia. He holds a PhD in Education and an LLB.

Emele Duituturaga-Jale is a Development and Gender Advisor with over 30 years of experience, having worked with governments, regional organisations, and civil society groups across the Pacific and globally. Duituturaga-Jale is an indigenous Fijian from Lakeba, Fiji, and has held various influential roles throughout her career. She served for a decade as the head of the Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (PIANGO) and as Fiji's CEO/Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Women, Social Welfare, Poverty Alleviation and Housing. She has also worked with organisations like the UN population Fund and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community. Her work spans gender equality, social inclusion, and climate change. She holds a Master's in Business.



Lopeti Senituli is a Tongan law practitioner and is the immediate past President of the Tonga Law Society. Senituli has extensive experience in government, having served as Political and Media Adviser to two Tongan Prime Ministers and as the CEO of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Tonga. Senituli is a long-term Pacific political activist having served as the founding Executive Director of the Friendly Islands Human Rights and Democracy Movement (2000-2003) and as the Executive Director of Pacific Concerns Resource Centre (PCRC), the secretariat of the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Movement (NFIP) from 1987 to 1993 in Auckland, Aotearoa – New Zealand and in Suva, Fiji from 1993 to 2000.

Secretariat: This Mission was supported by Pastor Billy Wetewea and Roselyne Makalu from Kanaky New Caledonia, with external regional advisory from Joey Tau, Murray Isimeli, Mereoni Chung, Hagino Erasito, and Alma Vakatora.

Annex 4 Key Messages

The Mission members delivered these key messages to the consulted Kanak communities at the conclusion of the mission, and prior to departure from Kanaky New Caledonia.

[Re-Affirmation of solidarity]

- As a Pacific Peoples Mission, we were invited by [EKPNC/PCC/PANG/Senat Coutumier and other solidarity partners in Kanaky New Caledonia] to engage in cultural exchange and pastoral visits with the groups most affected by the events of May 2024.
- Our mission is an expression of regional, cultural and ecumenical solidarity in the search for a peaceful and just resolution to the ongoing legacy of colonisation in Kanaky New Caledonia.
- We endorse/hear the call of Do Kamo to re-centre humanity within the dialogue around the real needs of the Kanaky New Caledonia people.
- Kanaky will always be part of the Pacific, as it has been for millennia, bound by connections of kinship, history and culture. France's relationship with the region is only a couple of hundred years old and has been based on conquest, domination and exploitation.
- We recognise the right of the Kanak people to self-determination and acknowledge their openness to construct a new, just society together with non-Kanak communities who share a commitment to an independent Kanaky New Caledonia.
- We are inspired by our meetings with organisations, neighbourhood groups, collectives, solidarity movements, political parties, and churches that continue to find ways to work together tirelessly, often with other ethnic groups that are un-resourced, towards a just society.
- We reaffirm the solidarity and ongoing support of Pacific peoples for the right to self-determination of the Kanak people.
- These are our initial findings, and we include some key messages that we would like to share with our regional networks. A detailed report will come at a later date through EPKNC.

[Situational context]

- The Pacific Peoples' Mission is deeply concerned about the severe crisis Kanaky New Caledonia is in, economically, politically and socially.
- Media portrayals of the political motivations for the May 13, 2024, uprising tend to mask the genuine concerns of the people of Kanaky New Caledonia, regarding their country.
- Women were present in all our meetings, demonstrating their important leadership role in the struggle. They have been engaging with the youth on the frontlines since May 13, caring for daily family needs, while still grieving and having to deal with the ongoing consequences of the institutional 'politics of revenge' against communities.

[Colonial framing of uprising and youth concerns]

- Though spontaneous, the youth-led uprising of May 2024 was the result of long-standing, unresolved and deepening socio-economic inequalities that signal France's culpability in its approach to decolonisation. Political parties, workers' unions and community groups had already been warning the state of the growing [frustration].

- Although the uprising was sparked by France's unilateral push to unfreeze the electoral rolls based on the flawed 2021 referendum, its intensity was fuelled by the longstanding failures of the state to deliver on the socio-economic development promised in the Accords to meet the needs of everyone.
- Forty years after the first Accords in 1988, the promised rebalancing of socio-economic development across the country has yet to materialise. We were told that between 2018 and 2024, France had abandoned the spirit of the Accords. For example:
 - a. The training of professional cadres has not happened.
 - b. The Customary Owners still only have 27% of the total land area of Kanaky New Caledonia, while the French state 50% and 23% is in private hands.
- We heard clearly that 'the youth of today are not afraid to die'. It is the same sentiment that was heard from their parents' generation during the events of the 1980s.
- *We also heard that the time for more Accords is over, and it is time for concrete actions towards self-determination, sovereignty, and independence.*

[Social resilience]

- Amidst the struggle, we are heartened by the resilient spirit of Do Kamo among the people, as reflected in their unrelenting commitment to ensure that the political, economic, and social hardships do not overwhelm their humanity.
- Where the state has failed and even rolled back its obligations to provide essential services, we have witnessed the resilience of the grassroots. We have heard, and in some instances, experienced how people have stepped in themselves to restore calm, address trauma collectively, and unify groups by filling service gaps through marketplaces, social gatherings, art festivals, and local initiatives that redistribute food and basic supplies to families in need.
- We are encouraged by the acknowledgement from political, customary, and church leaders that their support for the youth during the uprising came only after initial efforts by others, especially mothers and other collectives, to restore calm and reorganise society amidst challenging conditions.
- We are also encouraged by the community's acknowledgement of the need to restore relationships that will enhance the inclusion and participation of youth and women in the struggle for self-determination.
- We have been told that the solution must be found from within Kanaky. From the grassroots up, we have witnessed and heard inspiring stories of solidarity, courage and resilience to (re)unite communities and construct a peaceful and just future for Kanaky.
- We have been told that the solution must be found from within Kanaky. From the grassroots up, we have witnessed and heard inspiring stories of solidarity, courage and resilience to (re)unite communities and construct a peaceful and just future for Kanaky.
- We recognise the concern that there is a disconnect between the rhythms of the state-led political processes and the social processes, which must be recalibrated for meaningful discussions on the pathway forward.
- We acknowledge efforts to recognise and prioritise these sources of resilience throughout society, such as the key role played by cultural leaders, women, and youth in initiating political dialogue and in decision-making on the future of Kanaky New Caledonia.

[Collective punishment]

- While there are many victims in this circumstance, the most vulnerable are the Kanak and Oceanian populations, who bear the worst of the political, social and economic marginalisation and inequality.
- We are particularly concerned about the emergence of a politics of revenge with the imposition of collective punishment of Kanak communities by the state and loyalist authorities.
- France's refusal to hold the Provincial elections perpetuates this, making it possible for the Southern Province to be weaponised by disadvantaging Kanak and poor communities.
- The impacts include:
 - a. Widespread and growing unemployment since the May events is directly affecting the poorest households.
 - b. In Noumea, social housing is poorly maintained, and rising rents are increasingly out of reach for the unemployed and their families. Many of these homes are headed by females.
 - c. Education scholarships for lower-income households have also been withdrawn since May 2024 due to the Southern Province's introduction of a 10-year residency requirement, affecting access to education for young Kanak and other disadvantaged communities.
 - d. Steep increases in public transport fares place an additional burden on already-struggling households, particularly in terms of sending children to school and accessing work, where available.
- Kanak youth are the most afflicted victims of the growing socio-economic inequalities. Thousands were arrested following the May 2024 uprising, serving rapidly delivered sentences in overcrowded conditions that do not meet international human rights standards. Many have been transferred offshore without their families being aware of their whereabouts.

[A way forward - how Pacific peoples and networks can assist]

- We believe this Mission has come at a critical time. We are aware that there has been significant internal dialogue before the upcoming FLNKS Convention (26th April), specifically focused on how to respond to the scheduled visit by French Minister Manuel Valls, scheduled to take place from 29th April.
- We note that France is not a neutral arbitrator, but has always had a vested interest in the outcome as the colonial power. We are convinced that France has egregiously and repeatedly breached promises made in the Accords, yet is now asking Kanaky political movements to trust that it will behave in accordance with the responsibilities of the decolonisation process.
- Efforts to find a Kanak-led solution to a spiralling socio-economic crisis are hampered by France's ongoing interference and political distractions in the decolonisation process. France achieves this effort of destabilisation through French institutions and political structures, causing a widening gulf between the political processes and socio-economic concerns.

- We have been informed that the timeframes unilaterally imposed by France do not allow sufficient time and space for grieving and post-trauma recovery after May 2024, nor for consultation with the people. This is a repeat of France's refusal to engage with the independence movements regarding Kanak dissatisfaction with the third independence referendum.
- The mission heard that, because France has engaged in and continues to perpetuate major breaches of trust, there is a strong reluctance to participate in negotiations with the French Government.
 - a. Unilateral change to the tripartite Nouméa Accords regarding the third referendum and refusal to hold a free and fair third referendum
 - b. Belligerent insistence on unfreezing the electoral lists set up by the Nouméa Accords
 - c. Excessively violent response to protests on and in the weeks following May 13.
 - d. Failure of law-enforcement agencies to deal with the civil unrest starting on May 13 in a fair and even-handed manner.
 - e. Refusal to allow Provincial elections to take place despite the evidence from the legislative elections of 2024 that a free and fair election was possible.
 - f. The arrest and continued detention in France of political leaders of the Kanak independence movement.
- We believe that a precondition for discussions must be for France to rectify these breaches of trust.
- We, therefore, urge the French Government to take concrete steps to earn the trust and confidence of the representatives of the Kanak people and their legitimate aspirations for self-determination, sovereignty and independence. Specifically, we call for:
 - a. The immediate release of FLNKS President Christian Tein and other Kanak political prisoners.
 - b. The holding of Provincial elections at the earliest possible date.

[Regional opportunities]

- Revitalise the solidarity movement within the Region in support of Kanaky and strengthen the connection/proximity among the Pacific peoples.
- Support from the Pacific networks to facilitate people-to-people (youth) exchanges within the region, across multiple platforms (collaboration, visits, cultural and educational exchanges, training, participation in regional meetings, etc.), to reaffirm solidarity with Kanaky and regional support for self-determination.
- Work to ensure that Kanaky New Caledonia remains on the United Nations decolonisation list and that the self-determination aspirations of Kanaky New Caledonia remain an urgent priority for Pacific Leaders, individually and in the regional agendas of the MSG and PIF.

We will be taking what we have heard to our leaders and networks in the region. We hope that the PIF and the leaders of individual member countries will continue to support the decolonisation process in Kanaky New Caledonia.

The World is already in the fourth international decade of decolonisation. This mission believes the intensity of the decolonisation processes in Kanaky New Caledonia, should be increasing and should not be derailed. Self-determination is an inalienable right of colonised peoples and decolonisation is therefore a universal, rather than simply a French, matter.



END NOTES

^[1] Update: As of June , 2025, Christian Téin has been released from French custody with conditions. He is under judicial supervision and is not permitted to return to New Caledonia and not to be in contact with others from the independence movement. The decision also granted release to three other activists, Dimitri Qenegei, Guillaume Vama, and Erwan Waetheane, while upholding the release of Steeve Unë. Source: "French court orders release of New Caledonia Pro-independence leader," Anadolu Agency, June 2025. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/french-court-orders-release-of-new-caledonia-pro-independence-leader/3595699#>

^[2] Do Kamo: Khrist of the Islands! Transform Us into Your Authentic Humanity,' Pacific Conference of Churches 12th General Assembly Outcome Statement, 18 November 2023, Noumea, Kanaky New Caledonia.

^[3] Source: : [https://www.nouvelle-caledonie.gouv.fr/contenu/telechargement/10952/95279/file/230515_Audit_de_decolonisation_NC_RB_V3_EN%2020%20June%2023%20\(5\).pdf](https://www.nouvelle-caledonie.gouv.fr/contenu/telechargement/10952/95279/file/230515_Audit_de_decolonisation_NC_RB_V3_EN%2020%20June%2023%20(5).pdf)

^[4] Update: As of June , 2025, Christian Téin has been released from French custody with conditions. He is under judicial supervision and is not permitted to return to New Caledonia and not to be in contact with others from the independence movement. The decision also granted release to three other activists, Dimitri Qenegei, Guillaume Vama, and Erwan Waetheane, while upholding the release of a fourth, Steeve Unë. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/french-court-orders-release-of-new-caledonia-pro-independence-leader/3595699#>
https://www.lemonde.fr/en/france/article/2024/06/19/french-police-arrest-8-in-new-caledonia-including-pro-independence-group-head_6675141_7.html

^[5] Ibid

^[6] Source: <https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/556583/thousands-leave-new-caledonia-in-civil-unrest-as-long-recovery-awaits-those-staying>

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^[9] Source: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-12-08/france-government-collapse-barnier-new-caledonia-uncertainty/104694120>

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