H.E. Jurelang Zedekaia  
President  
Republic of the Marshall Islands

Dear President Zedekaia,


While no one can dispute the fact that “the future of the people lies in returning to the land and waters where they have lived and taken strength for centuries”, I cannot agree to returning people to contaminated lands and waters. The letter also seems to threaten discontinuation of support for the people of Rongelap if they do not resettle in accordance with provisions of the Resettlement Trust Fund Agreement and evacuate their settlement at Mejatto in Kwajalein.

I agree that a full and complete report must be made to Congress as to the expenditure of the funds connected with the resettlement program. However, I do not agree that the program has been carried out successfully, for much of the atoll remains contaminated and unsuitable for human habitation. Resettling the people of Rongelap under rules severely restricting their ability to move about their homeland, or to gather food from their traditional sources, does not constitute sensible repatriation. Threatening them with virtual starvation if they do not return is unjust and unfair. Even if radiological rehabilitation of the atoll were successful, which they have not been, public facilities and homes have yet to be completed. Housing the community in non-traditional locations leaves a lot of unanswered questions as to safety, security and survivability.

We are all witnesses to the debacle that was the resettlement of Bikini. It would be illogical for us to throw caution to the wind and disregard people’s concerns for their own peace and comfort just in the interest of justifying the closing of an unsuccessful program. We asked for the position of the RMI on this matter during the recent session of the Nitijela. We were never given a response to this question.

I am therefore placing this matter in your hands and requesting you to take into account the position of the people of Rongelap in the matter of resettlement. The people want to go home but not to a land where the future of their children will be placed in jeopardy, where they themselves cannot be assured of safety and security, and where they will remain strangers in their own home.

Kommol tata,

[Signature]

Sen. Iroij Michael Kabua

Republic of the Marshall Islands
CC: Hon. Anthony Babauta
      Ambassador Martha Campbell, United States Ambassador to the Marshall Islands
      Hon. James Matayoshi, Mayor of Rongelap
      Hon. Banny de Brum, Marshall Islands Ambassador to the United States
      Director Aly Frellick, Office of Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands, USDOS
      Rep. Nick Rahall, Chairman, Natural Resources Committee
      Rep. Doc Hastings
      Rep. Madeleine Bordallo
      Sen. Lisa Murkowski
      Sen. Daniel K. Akaka
      Sen. Jeff Bingaman, Chairman, Senate Energy Committee
      Min. Kenneth Kedi
      Min. John M. Silk