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Statement Offered at the 30th Session of the UN Human Rights Council

Item 3 – Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development, general debate (September 18, 2015)

Decolonization and self-determination are major human rights issues in the Pacific region. I am from the island of Rapa Nui, or Easter Island. The Rapa Nui people are fighting for their right of self-determination and we are questioning Chilean control of Rapa Nui.

Rapa Nui is a small island 2,200 miles from the coast of Chile. It has been inhabited continuously, since time immemorial, by the Rapa Nui people, who are organized into 36 clans, with our own distinct Polynesian language and culture. We have an elected, representative Parliament.

The Rapa Nui Parliament has attempted to exercise our right of self-determination by managing our cultural and archeological resources, including sacred ancestral ceremonial and burial sites, and by demanding limits on immigration to our small island.

When Chile claimed control of Rapa Nui in 1888, Chile violently pushed Rapa Nui off our lands, imprisoned us into one town, and, forced us into servitude. The Rapa Nui people were given the right to vote only in the 1960's.

Recently Chilean police arrested and detained four Rapa Nui Parliament leaders on political grounds, ordered the closure of the Rapa Nui Parliament, and carried out unlawful searches of the Parliament offices.

Chile controls Rapa Nui as a province within the region of Valparaiso, without federal representation. Chile does not recognize Rapa Nui as a colony, subject to the oversight of the Special Committee on Decolonization.

We, the Rapa Nui people and the Rapa Nui Parliament protest Chile's refusal to act in good faith and recognize Rapa Nui's right of self determination.

We, the Rapa Nui people continue to fight for our right of self-determination, for protection and management of the Moai (our sacred burial sites), for regulation of immigration to our island, and the decolonization of our territory.

Chile's recent actions violate the human rights and political freedoms of the Rapa Nui people. These actions threaten to destroy the Rapa Nui people.