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## EXPATRIATES HIDE AS LOCALS STORM RESORT

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HONIARA, Sunday: Australian and New Zealand workers redeveloping a tourist resort in the Solomon Islands hid behind locked doors as local landowners stormed through the hotel at the weekend demanding its closure.

About 50 expatriates are employed in the redevelopment of the Anuha Island Resort, in the Florida group, about 30 kilometres west of Honiara.

The resort is owned by the Australian-based **Pacific Resorts** Ltd, which is 70 per cent owned by Ariadne Australia Ltd.

Resort staff said local villagers had marched into the hotel and told officials to pack their bags and leave.

They said Australians and New Zealanders employed on the project were expected to leave tomorrow but would return after Christmas to finish the job.

Employees said the protest had been led by a local minister in the Melanesian Church, Father Robert Pule, himself a landowner.

They said police had been brought in from Honiara and were guarding the resort.

The Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands, Mr Ezekiel Alepua, has called the resort manager, Mr Brian Ray, and a land-owners' delegation to an urgent meeting in Honiara tomorrow morning to discuss the incident.

However, he described the protest as a "minor problem".

"The local people just showed their discontent. They walked through the resort and walked back to their village again.

"The Australians felt a bit frightened and decided to lock themselves in," he said.

He said the resort was on a leased island. It had changed hands about three times and the landowners were upset that control was always in foreign hands.

Anuha, one of the Solomons' newest **resorts**, is being redeveloped in line with the Government's policy of concentrating tourist development on uninhabited islands to minimise its effect on local culture.

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