

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

29 November 2021

Canadian Government Challenged to Stop Defying United Nations Decision on Oil and Gas Pipeline Construction

An urgent request to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to intervene in recent human rights violations against Indigenous peoples in BC has been submitted by a coalition of Indigenous rights, human rights, and environmental experts. The submission asks the UN committee to hold Canada accountable for repeated human rights violations against Indigenous peoples relating to fossil fuel expansion and for flouting a 2019 UN directive to stop work on the Coastal GasLink Pipeline.

In 2019, the UN committee called for Canada to halt work on the Coastal Gas Link pipeline, Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion project, and Site C dam until free, prior, and informed consent is obtained from Indigenous peoples. The committee also told Canada to withdraw police and private security forces from Wet'suwet'en territory, and to refrain from forcible removal and lethal force against peaceful land defenders.

The submission outlines serious, recent, and ongoing human rights violations in Wet'suwet'en territory, including continued pipeline construction without free, prior, and informed consent, forcible removal, arrest and imprisonment of peaceful Indigenous peoples by paramilitary RCMP, and arrest and imprisonment of legal observers and media. The document also points to violent arrest of Gitksan supporters in Gitksan territory.

Today, the submission authors were joined by other Indigenous, human rights, and environmental leaders, sending a letter that urges Prime Minister Trudeau to respect the rights of Indigenous peoples and the terms of the UN Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

“Canada’s willful disregard of the UN’s 2019 directive is disturbing, especially in light of the current climate catastrophe in British Columbia and the genocide of Indigenous women and girls. The relentless pursuit of oil and gas expansion is an existential threat to Indigenous peoples, children, and future generations,” says Zoë Craig-Sparrow, Director of Indigenous Rights and Environmental Justice at Justice for Girls. “It’s simply a wholesale violation of Indigenous, domestic, and international law.”

“Despite generations of genocidal laws, policies, and practices by governments and corporations, Indigenous peoples are still here defending our lands, our sovereignty, and our peoples. Our job is to call out grave human rights violations against any Indigenous land defender and push BC, Canada, Coastal GasLink, and the RCMP to stop breaking the law. The United Nations has called on Canada to stop these human rights violations and Canada needs to listen,” says Dr. Pam Palmater, Mi’kmaq lawyer, legal scholar, and Chair in Indigenous Governance at Ryerson University.

“We call on Prime Minister Trudeau to respect the rule of law, including Canada’s international obligations under human rights treaties. Canada’s pledge to implement the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples appears insincere: the government acts as if reconciliation and decolonization are sham commitments,” says constitutional law expert, Professor Margot Young.

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To see the urgent submission to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination regarding the recent forcible removal of Wet’suwet’en, go to:
http://www.justiceforgirls.org/uploads/2/4/5/0/24509463/urgent_submission_to_un_cerd_nov_2021.pdf

To see the letter signed by Indigenous, human rights and environmental organizations, go to:

English version:

http://www.justiceforgirls.org/uploads/2/4/5/0/24509463/29_november_2021_coalition_letter_to_trudeau.pdf

French version:

http://www.justiceforgirls.org/uploads/2/4/5/0/24509463/29_november_2021_coalition_letter_to_trudeau-french.docx.pdf

Background: United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination’s (2019) Decision 1 (100) on Canada:

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CERD/Shared%20Documents/CAN/INT_CERD_EW_U_CAN_9026_E.pdf

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