
Contact: Western Shoshone Defense Project (WSDP)

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*******For Immediate Release*******

Latest Development in Western Shoshone Land Rights Dispute

Organization of American States asks U.S. to Halt Actions Against Western Shoshone

On March 6, 1998, the Organization of American States' Inter-American Commission on Human Rights asked "the United States Government to stay its action [impeding Western Shoshone land use] pending an investigation by the Commission of the alleged facts." In February of 1998, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) issued Notices which threaten to impound the nationalized cattle that the Western Shoshone grandmothers Carrie and Mary Dann graze on disputed land. A second set of Notices threaten the forcible removal of Western Shoshone property from the contested lands in Crescent Valley. As a member of the OAS, the U.S. is legally bound to uphold the Organization's Human Rights principles.

This is the second such request the OAS has filed with the United States. The first was in 1993, the year the Dann sisters first filed **a complaint against the U.S. for denying them their collective rights as Western Shoshone people to their land and to their culture - which is inseparable from the land. The case also asserts that the U.S. has violated their rights to due process, to equal protection under the law, and to own property.** These charges stem from a Western Shoshone land rights struggle which has lasted for decades. Western Shoshone people continue to use and occupy their ancestral homelands as they have since time immemorial: they hunt, graze livestock, hold ceremonies, raise families, and gather traditional food and medicines. They act as caretakers for Newe Sogobia - protecting the land for the future generations, and passing on the history tied to it. Today, the United States is actively taking away the abilities of the Western Shoshone to continue this way of life. It denies them use of their lands, while at the same time it permits the degradation of these lands by multi-national mining corporations, the military, and the nuclear industry. **The OAS case addresses these current assaults on Western Shoshone people's culture and livelihoods.**

As Carrie Dann states: "The indigenous peoples are the only peoples whose land gets taken without our permission by the U.S. government, which claims to be a democracy. They are committing a spiritual genocide of our people. Our rights are given to us by the

Creator, but the U.S. treats us as less than human by taking them away.” **The case is the first filed before the Commission on behalf of Native Americans in the U.S.**

The Indian Law Resource Center, which is presenting the case before the Commission, wrote Elko BLM District Manager Helen Hankins, asking for an immediate response as to “whether the Bureau of Land Management intends to respect the request of the Commission to stay its action or plans to enforce the order.” **This afternoon, Ms. Hankins stated that the U.S. will not comply with the OAS’ request.**

Please contact Jennifer Allen, Marianna Aue or Christopher Sewall at the WSDP for more information about the case, for documentation of the above material, or for coordinating interviews or visits. Please also visit our web-site, at **www.alphacdc.com/wsdp**, for more information.

The Indian Law Resource Center is also available to comment on the case:

505-784-3016 (lead counsel James Anaya) or 406-449-2006 (main office)

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