



Public statement

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Canadians should not lose sight of underlying injustices facing the Lubicon Cree of Northern Alberta

Amnesty International and KAIROS are urging the federal government and the province of Alberta to recognize the right of the Lubicon people to control and benefit from the use of their lands and resources. Oil and gas development should only be permitted on Lubicon land with the free, prior and informed consent of the Lubicon people.

Although the Lubicon have never entered into a treaty, or otherwise given up any rights to their lands and resources, their traditional territory has been subject to thirty years of intensive resource extraction.

While billions of dollars of oil and gas revenue have flowed to the province of Alberta, the Lubicon face dire poverty and pervasive ill-health as a consequence of the contamination of their lands and the near-total destruction of their traditional economy. They are even denied access to many basic services – such as sanitation and access to safe drinking water – that other people in Canada take for granted.

Recently, considerable media attention has been focused on a dispute within the community over who legitimately represents the Lubicon as Chief and Council. Our organizations have no mandate to take sides in the current dispute which involves, among other things, a disagreement over the system for selecting leadership.

However, having visited the community and spoken to both sides it is clear to us that certain fundamentals are not in dispute. The Lubicon people clearly remain united in the assertion of their rights to their lands and resources. The greatest threats to these rights are the failure of the federal government to provide legal recognition to Lubicon land rights and the refusal of Alberta to respect Lubicon rights when issuing of permits for oil and gas development on their lands.

We urge all Canadians not to lose sight of these fundamental issues.

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