

Aug. 27, 2016

Solidarity Statement from O'odham Elders and Ceremony Leaders in Support of the Standing Rock Water Defenders

Greetings from the Elders and Ceremonial leaders of the O'odham, (the people) band of the Tohono O'odham (desert people) from our homelands in the occupied areas known as southwest Arizona and northern Mexico.

On this morning we send our support through sacred songs from Kach'k (the sea) and the medicine O'n (salt) and Ba'agk (Great Water Eagle) from the sea to the powerful Mother Earth energy and Shu'dag (water) in Standing Rock.

We stand in song facing the north, the home of the sacred Bear, in solidarity with you. We acknowledge the magnificent gathering that is awaking the powerful energies and medicines of the ancestors and the memories of the land that are bringing balance to the great council and unifying the people of Mother Earth.

We, the O'odham, understand the deliberate and intentional piece-milling of international corporate interest projects supported by United States federal and state entities and its usual list of collaborators who are illegally superseding original people's rights.

The pipeline was approved by the Army Corps of Engineers through the permit 12 process, which allows treatment of large scale projects like this pipeline as a series of many small projects, rather than one large project. This allows them to fast track the building of the pipeline and not be subject to the Clean Water Act and other federal environmental and cultural protection laws.

The federal government utilized this same process to build the border wall on the southern border and the vehicle barriers and spy towers that impact the O'odham on a daily basis. O'odham endure 24/7 surveillance and numerous attacks that violate our rights as O'odham and violate all human rights.

The United States and Mexico boundary cuts directly across O'odham lands and the Tohono O'odham Nation (the federally recognized government reservation) is less than a third of our original lands. The United States waived 37 protective laws on O'odham lands to construct the border wall, vehicle barriers, and spy towers. This waiver of their own federal laws and regulations disregarded protection of sacred ancestral grave sites and sacred ancient O'odham offering places and disregarded protection for water and the protection of the plants and animals.

Today, here on our homelands, the latest attack is the 200 foot tall Department of Homeland Security proposed Integrated Fixed Towers that were contracted to be built by the Israeli company Elbit Systems. The spy towers are proposed to be constructed along the western reservation boundary and not along the international border. The environmental assessment process was fast tracked intentionally with malice, and deliberately dismissed O'odham opposition to construction on sacred sites and ancient burial places and in O'odham communities. The previous project, the building of the wall to keep Americans "safe" from terrorism after 9/11, destroyed ancient remains which were removed. Ancient belongings labeled "artifacts" were not returned to direct descendants. Enough is enough!

We stand in solidarity to stop the intentional direct assault on humanity, Mother Earth, and Shu'dag (Water) being carried out by Energy Transfer Partners, the company building the Dakota Access Pipeline, and all its subsidiaries.

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