

WESTERN SHOSHONE DEFENSE PROJECT, CRESCENT VALLEY, NEVADA

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **U.N. TO PROBE U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES**

#### **U.S. NON-PROFITS SUBMIT 465-PAGE “SHADOW REPORT” DETAILING ABUSES AT HOME**

##### **INDIGENOUS (NATIVE AMERICAN) RIGHTS AMONG ISSUES TO BE REVIEWED**

GENEVA, JULY 5, 2006—Today, the Western Shoshone Defense Project joined a coalition of 142 U.S.-based non-profits and organizations and 32 individuals to release the most comprehensive review of human rights violations in the United States ever compiled. The 465-page “shadow report” was assembled for the United Nation’s Human Rights Committee as part of its review of U.S. human rights abuses later this month.

The U.N. review is a routine procedure that occurs every four years for countries that have ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The ICCPR is one of two treaties that together are equivalent to an international “Bill of Rights.” The U.S. signed and ratified the treaty in 1992, but the U.S. review – its second – is more than seven years late due to the State Department’s delay in submitting its own official report.

Last year, the U.N. warned that it would commence reviewing the U.S. without the official report if it were delayed any longer. The State Department submitted its official report on October 21, 2005.

*“We have rights to protect our homelands and stop the destruction of our land, water, and air by the abuses of the United States government and the multinational corporations. The situation is outrageous and we’re glad the United Nations is paying attention. Our people have suffered more nuclear testing than anywhere else in the world and they’re continuing underground testing despite our protests. Yucca Mountain is being hollowed out in order to store nuclear waste. We cannot stand for it – this earth, the air, the water are sacred. People of all races must stop this insanity now in order to secure a safe future for all.” Joe Kennedy, Western Shoshone.*

The “shadow report” is a rebuttal to the official U.S. report. Among the issues it documents are:

- **Indigenous Rights:** The rights of indigenous peoples – Native Americans – are being violated by the United States under Articles 1 and 27 of the ICCPR. U.S. laws and policies continue to be based on the outdated, racist doctrines of “discovery” and deny native peoples the ability to protect their lands and resources from destructive military activities, multinational mining and other extractive activities. The Western Shoshone received a decision confirming their ongoing human rights violations in March of this year and calling upon the U.S. to cease and desist from further destruction throughout the land base, spanning across Nevada, Utah, Idaho and California.
- **Immigration:** The physical abuse and intimidation many immigrants face when they are detained at the border and at airports, the failure of U.S. immigration law to protect immigrant families and respect their right to due process, and discrimination against migrant workers;
- **Hurricane Katrina:** The discriminatory nature of evacuation plans for New Orleans, the failure to protect against unnecessary loss of life, the discriminatory policies in the hurricane's aftermath resulting in violations of the right to vote, ignoring residents’ “right of return” and right to participate in the rebuilding process, and continued denials of access to basic necessities.

In the “shadow report,” the groups underscore the common theme that binds these human rights violations together: an unstated policy of “U.S. exceptionalism.” Before ratifying the treaty, Congress attached various “reservations, understandings and declarations,” limiting the application of the treaty within the U.S. The coalition members point to the U.S. claimed limitations on the treaty, the State Department’s reluctance to participate in the U.N. process, and the ongoing human rights violations in the United States as a systemic pattern of ignoring international human rights obligations.

*“We are Shoshone delegates speaking for a Nation threatened by extinction. The mines are polluting our waters, destroying hot springs and exploding sacred mountains—our burials along with them--attempting to erase our signature on the land. We are coerced and threatened by mining and Federal agencies when we seek to continue spiritual prayers for traditional food or medicine on Shoshone land.” Bernice Lalo, Western Shoshone.*

On July 10, members of the coalition will present findings from the report to the committee in Geneva. On July 17-18, representatives of the State Department and other federal agencies are expected to answer questions from the committee.

Last May after hearings held by the U.N.’s Committee Against Torture -- an international review process similar to the human rights hearing that will be held in July -- the Committee Against Torture demanded that the U.S. close the prison at Guantanamo.

The U.N. Human Rights Committee is expected to release its findings on July 28, 2006.

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