

The European Congress of Ethnic Religions, with members in 23 nations of Europe, wish to express our support for our Indigenous Brothers and Sisters of North America, in their struggle to preserve their sacred waters and their ancestral lands at Standing Rock, North Dakota, U.S.A.

The Dakota Access Pipeline is an environmental disaster waiting to occur; such a disaster would destroy the sources of drinking water for the Standing Rock Sioux, and lead to the devastation of the environment throughout that region. At a time when we already face an environmental catastrophe of global proportions as the result of climate change caused by humans, the nations of the world should be moving away from dependence on fossil fuels to embrace renewable energy sources, as has been happening in Europe for many years. The Dakota Access Pipeline is not a step forward: it merely maintains a status quo which favors the greed of large corporate interests that care only about profits and power.



Sami people at Stading Rock

Beyond that, the imposition of this pipeline on the local Indigenous people, as if they had no rights to their lands, is not an isolated act. Rather, it is yet one more event in a centuries-old history of aggressions against Indigenous populations that includes the violation of hundreds of treaties, the armed occupation and appropriation of Indigenous lands, the forced relocation of Indigenous communities, the compulsory indoctrination of Indigenous children, the destruction of Indigenous sacred sites, and prohibitions against the use of Indigenous languages and other aspects of their cultures and traditional ways. What is happening at Standing Rock must be seen in the context of this long systemic process, and that process must be identified by its proper name - genocide.

E.C.E.R. issues statement on indigenous resistance at Standing Rock

We, who are keepers of what little remains of the Indigenous, ethnic religions and spiritual traditions of Europe, are very familiar with genocide - our ancestors experienced it, starting over a thousand years ago: invasions, carnage, religious colonization, destruction and desecration of our holy ceremonial places and forests, and the erasure, even to the present day, of our ethnic Indigenous identities, cultures and religions. It was genocide so extensive and so complete that almost no one today is even aware that it happened.

The Indigenous peoples in North Dakota are not just standing against a pipeline: they are standing for the Land that is their Mother, as she is also ours; they are standing for the Sacred Waters that are the source of life; they are standing for their culture, for their ancestors, for their children; they are standing for their very lives.

Because we remember; because we honor those who went before us, and strive to keep their ways alive; because we are children of the same Mother, we reach out to our Brothers and Sisters in North Dakota, and join our hearts and our voices to theirs.

Andras Corban-Arthen

President for the European Congress of Ethnic Religions

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