

Forum: Human Rights Council II

Issue: Addressing the treatment of ethnic protesters

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Introduction

The issue of the indigenous people was brought to the United Nations in 1977 in Geneva Conference. In all parts of the world, indigenous cultures are threatened by the western culture with their stress on the individualism, competitiveness, consumerism and technological advancement. There has been forced assimilation upon the indigenous people to let them have a chance of surviving. Accompanying this forced assimilation is the massive loss of native culture, creating endangered human species. Things such as relocating them occurs because the newcomers are willing to build a profiting instead of letting the indigenous people live. Currently, many international laws are valid to the indigenous people. One law to consider the native peoples' rights is the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights on the native population, "In those states in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their groups to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language." This international law and more other laws are helpful to the struggling indigenous people.

Definition of Key Terms

Assimilation

Assimilation is the act of becoming a part of something else that is greater. For this instant, since the indigenous people are outnumbered by the western cultures, indigenous people are forced to follow the new cultures and abandon their own.

Indigenous

The definition of indigenous is natively belonging to the place, originally in a region or a country. Indigenous people are overthrown by the westerns (people who arrived on the land after the indigenous people arrived).

General Overview

Relocating the Indigenous people

Because the new comers want to make more money out of the land available, they do not want to give up their land for the indigenous people. Therefore, they relocate the indigenous people in order to build buildings, or develop that area. Once their land is removed from them, their lives are also in danger, which causes their culture to decline.

Deforestation

Especially in tropical regions, deforestation is a major problem for the indigenous tribal cultures. This is because forests provide a home and food source for them, however if they are relocated, they would lose their basic living needs. There are few reasons why relocating the indigenous people and deforestation occurs. First of all, the demands for timber are rising. To make money, the country would rather cut the trees than letting ethnic people live. Second, the country would need large areas to raise cattle to produce beef in beef producing countries, such as United States. In Central America, forest areas have been cut for cattle rearing purposes.

For the minerals

Minerals found on native land make the relocating process of the indigenous people faster. If there is a valuable mineral such as uranium in Australia, it is more likely that the aboriginal people will be relocated from that area. Certain places in Australia which has abundant uranium are occupied by the indigenous people. The mining companies are seeking native lands to mine uranium. Another place where this happens is in the Marshall Islands where the US nuclear weapon tests happen. When these happen, the radiation of the nuclear cause birth defects, cancer rates another related illnesses to the people around; therefore it is more likely that the indigenous people would have these defects.

Ethnic Protests in China

One of the most recent and large crisis in China was the Tibet protests. Thousands of monks and residents were out on the streets, while some cars and shops were on fire. Tibetans wanted independence from China, and the ethnic people decided to protest against it. The protest began in March 10, 2008, and this protest became more violent, and ended up killing citizens. Tibetans portray Chinese as people who believe that they are superior to the Tibetans, but they use torture, force and starvation to control Tibetans.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1988	Kosovo Protests
1989	Ethnic Protest In Yugoslavia
1990	Romanian Ethnic Protest
2001	Hanoi, Vietnam villagers minority protest
March, 2008	Tibet – China ethnic protest
July, 2009	China's western region of Xinjiang

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- World Bank recognized that indigenous people were likely to be harmed rather than aided by their development projects. One might consider this as a positive change for indigenous people, although the World Bank took this action yet, very little has been done to reform its policies.
- Opinion of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, March 7, 2005

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