
Press Release from the Apache-Nde-Nnee Working Group

UNITED NATIONS DECLARES THE HOLY SEE LEGALLY RESPONSIBLE AND ACCOUNTABLE TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLES FOR EFFECTS AND LEGACY OF RACIST COLONIAL BULLS AND DOCTRINES

14 January 2016

As the result of a comprehensive shadow report and presentations by members of the Apache-Nde-Nnee Working Group submitted to the United Nations (UN) Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) for the Committee's review of the Holy See, the UN CERD Committee has recognized that the Doctrine of Discovery, the Holy See's Inter Caetera and related Papal Bulls are within the legal scope of racial discrimination under International Law and therefore require redress.

The UN CERD Committee has also recognized in its concluding observations that the Holy See is responsible for the past and present effects, i.e. the ongoing legacy, of these historical racist legal documents, and that, in addition, the Holy See must be in direct dialogue with appropriate representatives of Indigenous Peoples to discuss its accountability.

The CERD Committee has additionally recognized that the Holy See, in its response to the Committee's questioning regarding issues raised by the Apache-Nde-Nnee Working Group, remarked that a high-level meeting between Indigenous Peoples and the Pope regarding the canonization of Juniper Serra (see pages 13, 14, 27, 28, 30, 34, 35, 38, 48 of the shadow report) will occur at an unspecified time in the future, but that knowledge of such a meeting with Indigenous Peoples has thus far excluded the Apache-Nde-Nnee and Working Group, as well as the additional issues raised in the shadow report, such as the the Doctrine of Discovery, the Holy See's Inter Caetera and related Papal Bulls, and the past and ongoing effects and legacy therein. The CERD Committee has concluded that these issues and appropriate representatives of Indigenous Peoples must be included in said high-level meeting.

With the support of the UN CERD Committee and its Concluding Observations therein, the Apache-Nde-Nnee Working Group holds firm and demands that this dialogue between the Pope and Indigenous Peoples must indeed occur, and must include the Apache-Nde-Nnee Working Group and the issues of the Apache-Nde-Nnee, including those issues raised in the Working Group's shadow report, for full accountability of the Holy See and justice to occur. These dialogues must result in genuine redress and remedy and in the establishment or supporting of the establishment of one or more related Truth Commission(s). Moreover, such a Truth Commission must occur with respect to self-determination, historical correction, and the rights of women and all affected peoples therein.

Follow-up by the UN CERD Committee on the progress of the Holy See in these measures will occur at the Committee's next review of the Holy See, as per the Committee's Concluding Observations.

For further questions or information contact:

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Apache-Nde-Nnee Working Group Shadow Report:

http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CERD/Shared%20Documents/VAT/INT_CERD_NGO_VAT_22151_E.pdf

CERD Concluding Observations:

<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G16/003/38/PDF/G1600338.pdf>

Video recordings of the CERD Holy See review sessions, including Apache-Nde-Nnee Working Group oral interventions:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=442ZQkPTblg&index=15&list=PL0F52AC5B69FB7D7F>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vITLIVl2ld0&index=16&list=PL0F52AC5B69FB7D7F>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w5AZX87f8Rc&index=17&list=PL0F52AC5B69FB7D7F>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8QTzEnx7Po&index=18&list=PL0F52AC5B69FB7D7F>

Transcripts of CERD - Holy See State review session:

<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G15/268/49/PDF/G1526849.pdf>

<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G15/271/06/PDF/G1527106.pdf>

Text from the CERD Committee Concluding Observations directly regarding the Holy See and Indigenous Peoples, as a result of the contributions of the Apache-Nde-Nnee Working Group, is as follows:

"Indigenous peoples

16. While welcoming the statement made by Pope Francis in the Plurinational State of Bolivia in July 2015, in which he apologized for the actions of the Catholic Church in the context of colonialism against indigenous peoples in the Americas, the Committee notes the concerns expressed by indigenous peoples regarding the current legacy and effects of the Doctrine of Discovery endorsed in the Inter Caetera from 1493 and its related papal bulls, as well as other issues (arts. 2, 5 and 6).

17. The Committee recommends that the State party engage in meaningful dialogue with indigenous peoples with the aim of effectively addressing their concerns. In this regard, the Committee takes note of the information provided by the State party delegation concerning a high-level dialogue that is scheduled to take place in Rome to address the concerns expressed by indigenous peoples, and recommends that the State party ensure that its interlocutors in this dialogue include appropriate representatives designated by indigenous peoples. The Committee requests the State party to provide information in its next periodic report on the outcome of the meeting and concrete follow-up measures taken."

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