



UNITED NATIONS
PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES
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Thank you Madam Chair,

Our organization, Ecospirituality Foundation, is primarily aimed at the defense of Indigenous Peoples traditional knowledge and sacred lands.

The Ecospirituality Foundation represents six indigenous communities through official mandates and today we stand before this assembly to deliver a joint-appeal on behalf of the Indigenous Communities that we represent – Communities subject to violations of Indigenous Peoples spiritual rights.

The Communities that we represent highlight emblematic cases of violations of Indigenous Peoples' spiritual rights.

The first case regards the Apache San Carlos, Arizona.

On official charges received by Ola Cassadore, President of the Apache Survival Coalition, we appeal in defense of Mount Graham, the maximum sacred land of the Apache, desecrated and jeopardized by the construction of an international astronomical observatory of immense controversy.

Despite the 18 years of Apache protests, despite the numerous appeals and the vast support of both indigenous and non-indigenous organizations world-wide, Mount Graham continues to be both desecrated and put at risk, whilst the Apache continue to be deprived of their sacred land.

The Apache sacred mountain continues to face desecration and threat thanks to the construction of an international astronomical observatory, a project undertaken, along with the University of Arizona, by the Vatican and the Arcetri Observatory of Italy, funded by the Italian government.

All of the Western Apache tribes have united together in this protest. In the last few years they have met many times with the Forest Service in order to obtain the enlistment of the mountain in the National Register of Historic Places, given its fundamental religious importance. However, Mount Graham has never been included in the Register, despite the fact that it possesses all necessary requirements. The Apache sacred mountain continues to undergo desecration and the Apache continue to be excluded from their maximum spiritual land.

Our second case of appeal regards the Wamba Wamba Nation of the Native Australians that encompasses the Clans of Victoria and South Wales of Australia. Gary Murray, president of the Wiran Aboriginal Corporation and of the Wamba Wamba Nation has been the promotor of an effort for the recovery of the Wamba Wamba Ancestor remains, spread throughout many of the world's museums. Much of these remains have not yet been obtained and the Wamba Wamba Nation seeks to adamantly reclaim its deceased.

Yet another emblematic case that we want to bring to the attention of this assembly is that of the Bassa People of Cameroon. Through the official mandate of its spokesperson, Samuel Brice Tjomb, we raise the appeal of the 12 tribes of the mountain Ngog-Lituba so that the Bassa People can be helped to defend its maximum sacred land and freely exercise its spiritual and cultural rights.

The Bassa People denounce the desecrations of their natural and spiritual sanctuary that is the sacred mountain NGOG-LITUBA, perpetrated by the Roman Catholic Church, whose ambition is to turn into its real estate this sacred place of pilgrimage, cradle of the twelve Bassa tribes, by virtue of its monopoly in Cameroon, a laic country. This explains the setting up since over a decade ago of a cross and a statue of the Virgin Mary atop the mountain. We demand the return to Cameroon of the mystical vestiges and the traditional heritage of the Bassa people kept away in European museums since the colonization of Cameroon by Germany, France, and Great Britain

The final case that we wish to bring to this Forum's attention regards an Indigenous European community that is currently impeded in the exercise of its free spiritual identity, hence raises a plea of assistance.

Before their annihilation by the historical powers, the European continent also housed Indigenous Peoples, the like of which possessed traditions substantially similar to the other Indigenous Peoples of the planet's remainder.

In France, at Carnac (Brittany) there is the outbreak of a case of one of these traditional communities that is currently unable to freely exercise its spiritual identity and therefore seeks assistance.

The megalithic complex of Carnac, sacred site for the Breton community, has been fenced off by the French government for over 17 years, which plans to transform the site into a museum, thereby stripping the Breton community of free access to its spiritual grounds.

Through the charges received by Céline Mary, president of the organization Menhirs Libre, we appeal to this Forum so that this native community may regain the right to use the megalithic complex of Carnac as spiritual reference, as it has always done since times long-gone, until 1990.

The violation of an Indigenous People's sacred land is a severe peril to its identity. We firmly uphold that every People have the right to preserve their traditions and spiritual beliefs.

We believe the identity of native Peoples to be based on their traditional knowledge. It is in these roots that they find reference to their history and spirituality. Without such roots the inheritance of Natural Peoples would surely vanish, bringing about the grave disappearance of all Indigenous Peoples identity.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to everybody present for having listened to this appeal.

Rosalba Nattero and Giancarlo Barbadoro

Representatives:

Apache Survival Coalition, Arizona

Wiran Aboriginal Corporation, Australia

Menhirs Libres, Brittany

Bassa Peoples, Cameroon

United Confederation of Taino People

Ensemble Allons dans la Paix, Benin