

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights

Working Group on Indigenous Peoples

Twenty Third session

Statement of Bobby Castillo Castillo Leonard
Peltier Defense Committee

Item 4

Review of developments pertaining to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples

(c) "Indigenous peoples and conflict resolution"

Mr. Chairperson,

On behalf of the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee, I would like to express our thoughts on the theme "Indigene peoples and conflict resolution".

On February 27, 1973, members of the *American Indian Movement* (AIM) began their seventy-two day occupation the village of Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge Lakota Reservation. Their goal was to protest injustices against the indigenous nations, violations of the many treaties, and current abuses and repression against their people. The US government responded with a military style assault against the protesters.

Throughout the next three years, long referred to by local Indigenous Peoples and by the *U.S. - Commission on C Rights*, as the "Reign of Terror," the FBI carried out a Counterinsurgency war on the Pine Ridge Reservation. During this "Reign of Terror," some sixty-four local Native Americans were murdered. Virtually all of the victims were either affiliated with AIM or their allies from the Lakota Nation. The FBI had jurisdiction to investigate major crimes, yet these deaths were never adequately investigated nor resolved.

The strife between the FBI and AIM culminated in a shootout on June 26, 1975 in Oglala. When the shootout ended, AIM member Joseph Killbright Stuntz lay dead, shot in the head by a U.S. Government sniper. His death has also never been investigated. Two FBI agents also found death that day. As you well know, Mr. Chair, these events led to the wrongful incarceration of Leonard Peltier.

After more than 30 years, the U.S. Government still won't recognize nor correct the wrongs of the past. Therefore again this year, the Lakota people of Oglala organized another Commemoration last June 26th under the theme "Let the Great Healing Begin" to remember the people who died during the Reign of Terror and to call for the release of Leonard Peltier. The community uses traditional ways such as prayers, ceremonies and conferences with youth and elders to heal the sacred hoop. Truth, justice and reconciliation are needed between Indigenous Peoples and States around the world.

We should all together be able to heal the transgressions of the past and *to* find a way to put an end to the injustices historically perpetrated on Indigenous peoples. We feel that wounds and scars of our peoples will heal one day. We are led to believe that most issues in our struggle to survive encourage forms of alternative justice and traditional, as well as contemporary ways of conflict resolution.

Mr. Chairperson, as it Is mentioned on last years' report (E/CN.4/sub.2/2004) paragraph 40 : 'Serious consideration should be given to arbitration as a means of conflict resolutions'. Therefore our organization would like to renew our call for the creation of an international mechanism with the mandate to act as an impartial third parties to help establish

dialogue between States and Indigenous peoples for peaceful resolution. Such mechanism would have been important this year during several conflicts involving indigenous peoples (in Osweken/ Six Nations in Canada, community of Atenco or in Chiapas - Mexico, in indigenous lands in Colombia or in Kanaky). Also, we would like a thought for the Beduin peoples and all civilians suffering in Palestine and Lebanon.

We need to find ways to help us survive these difficult times. Therefore we are grateful that this Working Group has initiated this very important debate on Indigenous peoples and conflict *resolution*. This shows the importance and valuable work of this Working Group because it gives an opportunity to us indigenous peoples to present development of our fundamental rights and to the United Nations to act at different levels by standard setting dependent review. We hope that all together we will find solutions to build a world of peace, justice and equality.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

Bobby Castillo
LPDC International spokesperson