

Human Rights Committee

TOPIC A:

Combating discrimination and violence against indigenous peoples



I. Introduction of topic:

In the world, there are more than 476 million people who are part of indigenous groups. More than 5000 different indigenous groups undergo discrimination day by day. The largest concentration of said groups is in Asia, with 70.5% of the total number. Following is Africa, with 16.3%, then Latin America with 11.5%. In Canada and the United States, Indigenous Peoples represent 6.7% of the total population, proving their representation of global biological diversity and their cultural significance.

The importance of upholding everyone's basic human rights cannot be understated. This becomes particularly apparent when talking about indigenous people as they have a distinct cultural identity, a rich historical background, and a unique way of life deserving of attention and care. In detail, indigenous people need to be involved in the respect of cultural rights, ergo, every indigenous person has to be able to maintain, practice, and revitalize their cultural traditions.

Indigenous people play a fundamental role in shaping the world's cultural basis, offering unique perspectives and traditions and changing knowledge systems that previously seemed unchangeable. Indigenous cultures are a mosaic of diverse traditions, art forms, and rituals. This diversity is a source of strength for the entire humanity, fostering a rich tapestry that reflects the complexity and beauty of our shared history. From a more objective point of view, the indigenous peoples' cultures bring with them languages, which encompass unique worldviews and philosophies. The international community's recognition of the importance of indigenous rights is growing, leading to collaborative efforts to address these issues. Various organizations, governments, and advocates are working together to implement policies that respect and protect the rights of indigenous peoples.

Protecting and advancing the rights and well-being of indigenous peoples is the main objective of efforts to combat discrimination and violence against them. The intention is to establish a haven free from the constant threats of violence and prejudice, where indigenous populations can live with security and dignity. This entails protecting them from various sorts of injustice, safeguarding their right to life, maintaining their culture, granting them self-determination, and promoting an environment that supports the values of equality, respect, and human rights for everyone.

II. Definition of key terms:

Indigenous peoples: People in independent countries who descend from the populations that previously inhabited the country and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions.

Discrimination: treating a person or particular group of people differently, because of their race, gender, sexuality, etc.

Self-determination: the ability or power to make decisions for yourself, especially the power of a nation to decide how it will be governed

Biological diversity: Biological diversity is all the different kinds of life you'll find in one area—the variety of animals, plants, fungi, and even microorganisms like bacteria that make up our natural world.

Cultural rights: Cultural rights are human rights that aim at assuring the enjoyment of culture and its components in conditions of equality, human dignity, and non-discrimination.

Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) is a specific right granted to Indigenous Peoples recognized in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which aligns with their universal right to self-determination. FPIC allows Indigenous Peoples to provide or withhold/ withdraw consent, at any point, regarding projects impacting their territories.

Intersectionality (or intersectional theory) is a term first coined in 1989 by American civil rights advocate and leading scholar of critical race theory, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw. It is the study of overlapping or intersecting social identities and related systems of oppression, domination, or discrimination. The theory suggests that various biological, social, and cultural categories such as gender, race, class, ability, sexual orientation, religion, caste, age, and nationality... interact on multiple levels.

Sovereignty is supreme power, especially over a body politic

III. Background information:

Throughout history, indigenous peoples have been subjected to severe injustices, including forced assimilation, colonialism, and displacement from their ancestral lands. These historical injustices have had a substantial negative influence on the social, cultural, and economic well-being of Native American communities.

Resource exploitation and land dispossession have been significant issues for indigenous populations, leading to conflicts and violations of their human rights. There are numerous examples of land wars when the invasion of native territories results in hardships for the local population and the continuation of injustices.

Programs of forced assimilation, such as residential schools and boarding schools, have harmed indigenous cultures and languages in the long run. The difficulties indigenous populations today face are made worse by the fact that the repercussions of these actions are still being felt.

Among the issues confronting society today are poverty, limited access to healthcare and education, and the looming threat of environmental degradation and climate change. In the face of these challenges, indigenous tribes demonstrate resilience and persistence as they fight to preserve their unique identities and ways of life.

It is crucial to recognize that there are indigenous peoples on every continent and that they are all dealing with unique challenges when thinking about indigenous peoples worldwide. Global concerns like violence and prejudice against indigenous peoples necessitate coordination and coordinated responses. They don't stay in just one place.

IV. Current issues:

Land Rights and Displacement:

Due to activities such as mining, deforestation, and many other actions that degrade and cause issues to lands, many indigenous communities are being displaced without having a word in it. The issue has its source in the lack of legal recognition of Indigenous lands and territories.

Discrimination and Marginalisation:

The issue of marginalization and discrimination is a very important one when it comes to indigenous peoples, said people often face discrimination based on their cultural identity, language or traditional practices. The issue often results in limited access to primary resources such as education, healthcare, employment and other essential services.

Violence and Human Rights Abuses:

Indigenous communities may experience violence, including physical and sexual violence, often linked to land conflicts, resource extraction, or discrimination. Human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances, are significant concerns in some regions.

Environmental Degradation and Climate Change:

The Indigenous groups are often heavily dependent on natural resources and are thus hardly hit by issues caused by the rest of the world such as environmental degradation, and deforestation. and climate change. These issues profoundly threaten their traditional ways of life and proportionally to the rest of social groups the Indigenous groups are affected much more.

Lack of Political Representation:

Indigenous peoples may have limited representation in national governments and decision-making bodies, leading to a lack of influence in policies that affect them directly.

Globalization and Cultural Appropriation:

Oftentimes, the indigenous cultures become the subject of jokes and society culturally copies the indigenous cultures, due to globalization, some of the traditions previously associated with certain indigenous groups lose meaning and a sense of proprietary and originality.

V. Agencies involved:

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues is an advisory body for the Economic and Social Council, established on the 28th of July 2000, and was created to deal with the issues of indigenous peoples related to economic and social development, culture, the environment, health, and human rights.

The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) is a global human rights organization dedicated to promoting and defending Indigenous Peoples' rights.

Cultural Survival has been advocating for indigenous people's rights and their self-determination, political resilience, and culture since 1972. It envisions "a future that respects and honors indigenous peoples' inherent rights and dynamic cultures, deeply and richly interwoven in lands, languages, spiritual traditions, and artistic expression, rooted in self-determination and self-governance".

Minority Rights Group International (MRG) is an international NGO working to advance the protection of ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities and indigenous peoples around the world.

VI. Main countries involved:

Canada: Inuit, Métis, and First Nations peoples make up a sizable portion of the country's population. Indigenous rights, land claims, and residential school-related problems have been hotly debated and actively supported issues.

United States: Issues with sovereignty, land rights, and socioeconomic inequality confront Native American tribes and Indigenous peoples in Alaska. Crucial topics include the acknowledgment of tribal sovereignty and consultative procedures.

Australia: Concerns about land rights, health, education, and overrepresentation in the criminal justice system affect Australia's Indigenous peoples, often known as Aboriginal Australians.

New Zealand: Talks on socioeconomic inequality, language revival, and cultural preservation are being actively participated in by the Māori people, who are the country's indigenous population.

Brazil: The country is home to a wide variety of indigenous peoples who reside in various parts of the Amazon jungle. Urgent concerns include violence against indigenous groups, encroaching territory, and deforestation.

Mexico: A sizable and diversified Indigenous population, comprising the Maya and Zapotec peoples, resides in Mexico. The three main issues are land rights, cultural preservation, and economic opportunities.

Norway: The Sámi people, who are native to portions of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia, are in favor of having their rights to land and resources recognized as well as their right to self-determination and the preservation of their culture.

Peru: The Quechua and Amazonian indigenous populations in Peru face issues with land rights, environmental preservation, and the effects of resource extraction.

VII. UN Treaties and Historical Events:

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) is a declaration providing a framework for the reconciliation, healing, and peace of Indigenous Peoples as well as their harmonious cooperation with UN countries.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention recognizes Indigenous people's right to self-determination within a nation-state and it sets standards for national governments regarding Indigenous People's economic, socio-cultural, and political rights.

In June of 2016, the Organization of American States (OAS) ratified the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. A human rights instrument akin to the UNDRIP, it recognizes a suite of human and civil rights relative to the first peoples of the Americas.

Over the past decade, legal developments at the regional level have contributed a lot to the evolution of international jurisprudence as it relates to

indigenous peoples. The decisions of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the decision of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in the Endorois case confirm that indigenous peoples' rights to their lands, territories, and resources, as well as the principle of their free, prior and informed consent, are part of the corpus of binding human rights law.

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