



IACHR GRANTS THEMATIC HEARING ON IMPACTS TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' HUMAN RIGHTS FROM URANIUM EXPLOITATION

**Historic Hearing to be Held in Washington, D.C.
Weds, Feb. 28th at 11am EST/9am MST**

What: Inter-American Commission on Human Rights' Thematic Hearing

Where: IACHR/OAS, 1889 F St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006

When: Wednesday, February 28, 2024 at 11am EST/9am MST

Who: Members of the Navajo Nation, Ute Nation and Oglala Lakota Nation will testify

Why: Impacts of Uranium Exploitation on the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the United States

How to attend: In-person at IACHR/Organization of American States (OAS) located at 1889 F St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006 or watch online on IACHR's website <https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/sessions/?S=189> or on the IACHR YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/@comisionIDH>

This is a historic moment because it is the first time the IACHR is holding a thematic hearing exclusively addressing the United States' past and present policies on uranium exploitation and its impact on Indigenous peoples' human rights. In 2015 the IACHR held a [thematic hearing](#) on the "Impact of Extractive Industries on the Sacred Sites of Indigenous Peoples in the United States," where the Navajo Nation, Pueblo of Laguna, San Carlos and others participated.

In a decision that coincides with a disturbing [uptick in uranium development activity](#), the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has agreed to hold a "thematic" hearing on how U.S. uranium exploitation policies have resulted in human rights abuses in Indigenous communities across the country.

As the United States doubles down on the misguided notion that nuclear power is a solution to the climate crisis, the uranium development industry is beginning to benefit from generous taxpayer giveaways to the nuclear industry as a whole. Subsidies from the Biden administration have spurred uranium mining production to restart in at least 3 mines in the last few months, in Utah, Wyoming, and in Arizona near the Grand Canyon. As has been the case since the dawn of the Atomic Age, the impacts of uranium mining are largely left out of the debate over nuclear power.

The thematic hearing will allow Native communities who have lived for generations with the waste from historic uranium mining and milling to hold U.S. government officials to

account in a public forum for the government's failure to address waste from uranium development in any meaningful way.

- Red Water Pond Road Community Association members Edith Hood & Teracita Keyanna from the **Navajo Nation** will testify about how the federal government has for generations ignored the public health, environmental and cultural crises uranium development has caused in their communities.
- Yolanda Badback, White Mesa Concerned Community, a member of a **Ute Mountain Ute** tribe will testify about how state and federal officials have refused to listen to their concerns about the uranium mill in their community.
- Tonia Stands, Magpie Buffalo Organizing, an **Oglala Lakota** community member, will testify about the difficulties of living under the threat of new uranium mining, while legacy waste remains unaddressed.
- Carletta Tilousi, **Havasupai** Tribe Anti-Uranium Subcommittee, will provide testimony on uranium policy.

In addition to community testimony, the U.S. government will have the opportunity to respond, and the Commission will have the opportunity to ask community members and government officials questions.

The thematic hearing will be held on February 28 in Washington, D.C. The hearing will be live-streamed on IACHR's [website](#) and [YouTube](#) channel.

The [Inter-American Commission on Human Rights](#) is a principal and autonomous organ of the Organization of American States (OAS) whose mission is to promote and protect human rights in the American hemisphere. It is composed of [seven independent members](#) who serve in a personal capacity. Created by the OAS in 1959, the Commission has its headquarters in Washington, D.C. Together with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, installed in 1979, the Commission is one of the institutions within the inter-American system for the protection of human rights.

Jonathan Perry, Coordinator, Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment, said, ""This is a major opportunity for frontline Indigenous communities to come forward to document the injustices they continue to endure. The legacy of the uranium mining industry continues to impact many Indigenous people across the continent without any real solutions from the US government. We must acknowledge the negative results of nuclear and uranium development in our communities. We must also shed light on the lack of priority in providing real solutions in clean-up of uranium mining and milling waste by federal regulatory agencies. This Thematic Hearing would document the consequences of the U.S. government in their continued violations of human rights within their own policies and regulations."

Edith Hood, President, Red Water Pond Road Community Association, said, "Nahasdzáán Shimá—Mother Earth—provides everything we need to keep us alive—the four things we Navajos talk about —air, water, soil, and light—and it is our home. We have been living with this silent killer without knowing the dangers. Once the mining started, after the drilling, we didn't realize we were being contaminated. We didn't understand what we couldn't see, smell or touch. When we were children playing and herding sheep we didn't understand we were being exposed to dangerous radiation. I worked for a few years at the Kerr McGee Mine but the officials said we were in no danger. After the mining we really started to notice the problem, the health issues and concerns. Cancer and breathing problems especially in children and childhood diseases were becoming prevalent. Multiple family members started having liver

issues. We found out our soil was contaminated in 2003. 21 years later and we are still at it with nothing happening. There have been generational impacts from the uranium industry. We thank the IACHR commissioners for listening to us, when our own tribal government doesn't listen to us. The Tribal government put us at this risk but never came back to check on the people and the land."

Larry King, ENDAUM, said, "We only have one Mother Earth, and as stewards, we ALL have a responsibility to protect Mother Earth if we are to leave a healthy environment for our future generations to benefit from."

Eric Jantz, Legal Director, New Mexico Environmental Law Center (NMELC), said, "For decades, the U.S. government's dismal human rights record related to uranium exploitation in indigenous communities has been overlooked, ignored and suppressed. This will be the first time the U.S. government has been called on to explain why U.S. uranium policy continues to destroy native communities."

For more information:

Eric Jantz, Legal Director, New Mexico Environmental Law Center, (505) 980-5239, ejantz@nmelc.org

Jonathan Perry, Coordinator, Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment (MASE), (505) 979-1027, jperry@swuraniumimpacts.org