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Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

DATE: 10/18/19

SL: Indigenous Peoples' Day isn't just about Columbus

[Justice and Liberation for Indigenous Peoples are Imperative for Progressive U.S. Foreign Policy](#)

This Monday marked [Indigenous Peoples' Day](#), a day that isn't just about ending the glorification of Columbus and the oppression he contributed to. It's also about Indigenous people reclaiming the truths about their past, and reclaiming agency, visibility, and power, here on Turtle Island and everywhere.

Colonialism, white supremacy, militarism, and economic and environmental exploitation — whether in U.S. domestic or foreign policies — continue to disproportionately devastate Indigenous populations. But Indigenous communities are not just victims and survivors of systemic injustices. Indigenous people are leaders and movement-builders of global struggles — some of the most important of our lifetime — to transform the current system that relies on legacies of colonialism to one that elevates the rights and liberation of Indigenous communities, and all impacted people.

LEGACIES OF COLONIALISM

Domestic and foreign policy has been fueled by militarism and human and environmental exploitation — threatening the rights, dignity, and sovereignty of Indigenous communities for centuries through today.

Effects of Nuclear Weapons

The legacies of colonialism are abundantly clear when we look at [who](#) is most affected by nuclear weapons development and testing: Indigenous communities who live near uranium mines and at, or downwind of, nuclear test sites and production facilities. Last week it was [reported](#) that Indigenous women and children still carry uranium in their blood years after nuclear development halted. The U.S. government has abandoned [uranium mines on Navajo land](#), polluting nearby water supplies, which has resulted in increased cancer rates that persist today. Far out in the Pacific, the Marshall Islands became a major U.S. nuclear weapons test site to [devastating effect](#) on the islands' Indigenous people. And downwind of the Nevada test site, [the Navajo Nation](#), and other communities throughout the U.S. southwest, [are still fighting](#) to be justly compensated for the harm caused by nuclear fallout over many decades.

There are countless more examples of the harms caused by nuclear weapons development and production on Indigenous land and people. Our collective failure to fully reckon with this past masks

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the real dangers nuclear weapons still pose today and makes it more likely we will repeat this ugly history.

Police & Border Militarization

Militarization in society continues to disrupt and devastate Indigenous peoples' lives and livelihoods. According to [data](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Native Americans are killed in police-related shootings at a higher rate than any other racial or ethnic groups in the United States, yet receive little recognition of, or justice for, these disproportionate attacks

Similar injustices also extend to the U.S. southern border where Trump has engaged in relentless efforts to build his hateful wall and has deployed approximately [7,000 military troops](#). While the brutality of border militarization and the harm it imposes upon migrants has been more obvious and covered by major headlines, the impact of these actions on [Indigenous communities and Nations living around the U.S.-Mexico border](#) — and the [threat it imposes](#) on Indigenous rights and sovereignty — has been largely ignored. Increased border militarization must end to not only ensure we are protecting the rights of people seeking asylum, but also to not further harm Indigenous communities who steward the land on which the U.S. border was built, and preserve their territory, tribal unity, and livelihoods.

Environmental Exploitation

The United States also continues to exploit the water, air, and land outside and within its borders — on land that it stripped and stole away from Indigenous communities long ago with no accountability or reparations. The exploitation of nature irreparably harms human health and development, violates Indigenous land rights, and in many cases even threatens the continued existence of Indigenous populations. Trump has accelerated this exploitation by, for example, pulling out of the Paris Climate Agreement, rolling back [85 environmental regulations](#), and emboldening fossil fuel extractions on sacred and indigenous territories — territories that make up all of Turtle Island currently colonized by the United States government.

IN THE FIGHT FOR CHANGE, INDIGENOUS PEOPLE LEAD THE WAY

Indigenous people are not just survivors and victims of violence and exploitation imposed by the U.S. and other oppressive systems, they are also leaders in mobilizing against these injustices to protect, empower, liberate, and revitalize their communities and peoples globally. Take for example:

- As forest fires devastated the Amazon in Brazil this year, Indigenous activists who live in the Amazon [brought attention](#) to the lack of response from the Brazilian government and engaged foreign leaders to fund efforts to stop the forest fires.
- Similarly, in Ecuador, Indigenous activists [protested](#) for weeks against the government to end mining and oil extraction from Indigenous land to both defend their land rights and to protect the environment for future generations.
- The [Tohono O'odam Nation](#), which covers both U.S. and Mexican geography, is fighting in Congress to prevent a closed border that would heavily disrupt the interconnectedness of the

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Nation's tribe. Currently, Tohono O'odam people have only three places on the border to cross, and increased border restrictions will threaten the existence of the community.

- [Indigenous protestors](#) at Mauna Kea, Hawai'i continue to unite in resistance against the Thirty Meter Telescope project (TMT), which will further destroy this sacred mountain that has already seen too much construction for other telescope projects.
- While there is little representation of Indigenous people in Congress, Representatives Deb Haaland and Sharice Davids are the first Native American women to be elected to Congress and are working to bring Indigenous peoples' issues, including [the harmful impacts of uranium exposure](#) and [others](#) to the attention of the public.

SOLIDARITY

Inclusion and rights for Indigenous peoples and the eradication of systems of oppression are imperative for a progressive U.S. foreign policy. Indigenous people have always been leading, and will continue to lead, movements for justice and their own liberation. To be worthy allies and contributors to these goals, we must commit to uplift and reinforce Indigenous movements for change and their visions for a better world, here and abroad. We must also acknowledge and take accountability for the centuries of atrocities, oppression, cultural erasures, and violence that have been, and continue to be, committed.

For more resources, see this [thread](#) of a short list of Indigenous organizations who are fighting back. See also organizations like [Cultural Survival](#), which is working to bring justice to Native people who have suffered the most from failed-U.S. policies on nuclear weapons or [Indigenous Environmental Network](#), which played a large role in the Standing Rock protests and is continuing to work against the [Keystone XL pipeline](#).

BURIED LEDES

Denying reported **shortages of medicine** in India-administered Kashmir, India has made the conflict even [more deadly](#) for some of the most vulnerable populations there.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un was photographed **riding a white horse** on the sacred, often used for propaganda, [Mount Paektu](#).

Boy, Bye... Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan [reportedly threw](#) Trump's letter on Syria in the garbage.

Are you accepting Emirati money? A [new report](#) shows the UAE's vast influence on U.S. firms in Washington, DC.

18 activists [were arrested](#) this week protesting **Trump's continued destruction of the life-saving U.S. refugee resettlement program**.

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Ignoring the gross human rights violations, **Instagram influencers are working for the Saudi Arabian government** to help [rehabilitate its image](#).

In an effort to counter Trump's chaos-first foreign policy, **the House rebuked Trump** for pulling out of Syria in [a resolution](#) this week.

California is **eliminating for-profit prisons by 2028** which have been [cited](#) for inhumane living conditions and have perpetuated racist, anti-migrant policies through illegal detention.

If we **cut military spending**, we could afford [Medicare-for-all](#) without raising taxes.

And finally, Catholics get a [21st century upgrade](#) as the **Vatican released an "eRosary"** bracelet to track prayers and religious study.