

U.S. senator asks Biden to free Leonard Peltier



?Leonard Peltier, 46 years in prison for a crime he did not commit.?

Washington, February 7 (RHC)-- U.S. Senate President pro tempore Patrick Leahy has called for the release of Native American activist Leonard Peltier, imprisoned for 46 years for crimes he never committed.

"There is no question that our criminal justice system is imperfect, and Peltier knows firsthand how imperfect it can be," the Vermont Democratic lawmaker told President Joe Biden in his unequivocal plea for clemency.

His trial was so riddled with flaws that even one of the prosecutors who tried him acknowledged that Peltier was wrongly convicted, he added in his request to the occupant of the Oval Office.

According to Leahy, releasing the inmate on an expedited basis "is the right thing to do."

In prison since Feb. 6, 1976, Peltier is now 77 years old and ill with multiple health problems, he recalled.

"I have long believed that pardons and commutations are vital tools for providing clemency and relief, especially when our criminal justice system has been contorted to propagate injustices," Leahy concluded.

In a recent statement, Peltier, considered America's longest-serving political prisoner, described the conditions of his confinement in a Florida federal prison as a "torture chamber."

"The loneliness and lack of care are like a torture chamber for sick and elderly people," warned the also writer and poet.

Of Anishinaabe Lakota descent, leader of the American Indian Movement (AIM), which emerged in the 1960s in the heat of the struggles for Civil Rights, Peltier was accused of the murder of two FBI agents in 1975 during a shooting that took place in the Pine Ridge aboriginal reservation, in South Dakota.

At that time, massacres of natives took place and as a consequence of this harassment of the Lakota people, more than 250 people of this indigenous nation were murdered, without the crimes having been investigated until now.

Several international organizations denounced irregularities in the trial that condemned Peltier in 1977 to two consecutive life sentences and it is even said that there are more than 10,000 pages with categorical evidence that would absolve him immediately.

Filmmaker Michael Moore urged Barack Obama to review the multiple documents that prove that Peltier did not have a fair trial, but the former African-American president followed the same line of his predecessors.

Born on September 12, 1944, when he was imprisoned in February 1976 he was a young fighter for the rights of native peoples and had already known repression and jail, historians point out.

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