

I will not be silent: Australia censures senator for King Charles protest



Indigenous Senator Lidia Thorpe says she has no regrets as Senate expresses disapproval of protest against the monarch. [Victoria Jones/Pool/Getty Images]

Canberra, November 18 (RHC)-- Australia's Senate has voted to censure Indigenous lawmaker Lidia Thorpe after she heckled Britain's King Charles III during his visit to parliament last month. The vote, led by Australia's governing Labor Party, was passed with 46 votes in favour and six against.

Lidia Thorpe, a Gunnai, Gunditjmara and Djab-Wurrung woman who represents the state of Victoria, released a statement before the vote, saying she would not be silenced by the measure.

The Senate does not have the power to appoint or remove senators, and censure motions, though politically symbolic, do not carry legal weight.

"I will not be silent. The truth is, this colony is built on stolen land, stolen wealth and stolen lives," Thorpe said in the statement.

"The British Crown committed heinous crimes against the First Peoples of this country. These crimes include war crimes, crimes against humanity and failure to prevent genocide. The Crown must be held accountable for these crimes," she added.

Although Australia has had de facto independence from the United Kingdom since 1901, it remains a realm of the Commonwealth, meaning that King Charles is Australia's head of state.

Charles was attending a ceremonial welcome and parliamentary reception at Australia's Parliament House in Canberra on October 21 when proceedings were briefly interrupted by Thorpe's protest. "You committed genocide against our people. Give us our land back! Give us what you stole from us!" Thorpe yelled out as she entered the room where the king was being officially welcomed.

"Our bones, our skulls, our babies, our people. You destroyed our land!" "This is not your land!" she continued as security guards led her away.

Recordings of the protest were viewed and shared around the world, with the rare direct protest against the British monarch sparking consternation from some and celebration from others.

After the censure was passed by the Senate on Monday morning, Thorpe ripped the piece of paper it was printed on into two pieces, Australia's public broadcaster reported.

The gesture appeared to be a nod to New Zealand's Te Pati Maori legislator Hana-Rawhiti Maipi-Clarke, who last week ripped up a copy of a bill revising a treaty that granted land rights to Maori tribes, before beginning a traditional haka dance in protest.

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