

Indigenous From 100 Countries Demand Equality But Ignored by UN



United Nations, May 21 (RHC)-- The 15th session of the U.N. Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues began this year in New York on May 9, with over 100 member states present and the participation of over 100 Indigenous groups from as many countries who were hoping that their demands for equal rights be heard, but instead only found deaf ears.

A Mohawk leader told teleSUR that the Forum is riddled with bureaucratic processes and producing no real meaningful action. Tori Cress, an Onkwehonwe activist living in Wahta Mohawk territory in the region known as Muskoka, Canada, and who attended the forum this year, spoke with teleSUR about how it does not address the concerns of Indigenous people.

Referring to Canada's recent ratification of the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Cress stated that it will not at all assert Indigenous rights. "It's still patriarchal, like this is how we're gonna determine you, you're gonna do it our way," she said, adding that as the Declaration will be implemented under Canada's constitution, that doesn't represent self-determination for Indigenous peoples at all. Canada's being applauded but I don't see it as a way forward for Indigenous rights in Canada."

Her thoughts on the permanent forum itself are much similar. Indigenous people occupy a subordinate position at the two-week event, while member states "absolutely have more say at the forum," she explained.

The Akha Heritage Foundation, an organization representing the Indigenous Akha that are originally from Mongolia, have observed that country delegates are given priority over Indigenous participants. Often, the Foundation notes, they give generalized statements about their positive treatment of indigenous peoples, or completely deny the existence of Indigenous peoples in their countries altogether.

It is such an unequal environment at the Permanent Forum that prompted the North American Indigenous Peoples Caucus to call for the cancellation of the UN event, back in 2014.

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