

# Popular support grows for anti-oil pipeline protesters in North Dakota

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A week after more than 140 demonstrators were violently arrested by police in North Dakota, protests are continuing against the \$3.7 billion Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), which will transport oil 1,200 miles from the state into Illinois.

The demonstrators, mostly poor Native Americans, have bravely stood up to private security guards, militarized police, SWAT teams, and the National Guard. The protesters have set up blockades and encampments in an effort to stop the pipeline's construction, which will destroy tribal lands and potentially pollute the environment.

As the protests continue, the demonstrators have attracted support from all over the world. Some 90 percent of those arrested last week were mostly Native Americans from other tribes all over the North American continent. Online, the demonstrators are getting enormous support on social networking site Facebook. At least 1.3 million people have "checked in" to the Standing Rock Indian Reservation online.

An online crowdsource fund for the protesters has generated over \$1 million in contributions. The donations go to mostly cover legal costs, food, and other supplies to keep the encampments going. Between Thursday and Friday of last week alone, more than \$200,000 was raised after the protests and mass arrests made national headlines.

Tribal chairman Dave Archambault told CBS news, "I know the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe is not alone; we have overwhelming support," adding that their tribe would help others "in their fight against corporations."

A New Hampshire donor who gave \$30 to the fund was motivated because her community faced a similar battle against a natural gas pipeline. She told CBS news, "They are saying the same thing: This is our water supply. You run a pipeline through it and it leaks,

you are poisoning us. That's exactly what I spent two years of my life saying," adding, "This really, really struck a chord with me."

While the protests have gained more support among a broad mass of the population, Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton has until now only given silence and the most meaningless statements of non-support to the protesters.

Clinton spokeswoman Xochitl Hinojosa released a pathetic statement that "all voices should be heard" and that all parties, protesters and government and corporations alike, "need to find a path forward that serves the broadest public interest." In other words, the peaceful protesters are the same as the corporations behind the pipeline with their attack dogs, private mercenaries, helicopters, pepper spray, sound cannons, concussion grenades, batons, bean bag shotguns, tasers and tanks.

It should be noted that the Clinton campaign only bothered to make a statement after a group of Native American youth traveled to the presidential candidate's headquarters in New York City seeking to get her support, but were forced to leave empty-handed.

Both Clinton and Republican Donald Trump are committed to expanding oil and natural gas production in the US, regardless of environmental or cultural considerations, or workers' rights.

Richard Trumka, president of the AFL-CIO, took a predictably reactionary stance on the anti-DAPL protests, claiming falsely that they were hurting workers in the area. Trumka released a statement defending the pipeline and attacking protesters for "hold[ing] union members' livelihoods and their families' financial security hostage to endless delay."

Actually, it is Trumka and the lavishly paid union apparatus that hold workers and their families hostage

to the profit motives of big business, not the protesters.

A United Nations group is investigating human rights abuses on the part of North Dakota authorities against protesters. A representative of the UN's permanent forum on indigenous issues has been collecting testimony from protesters regarding excessive force during arrests and inhumane treatment at the jails.

Roberto Borrero, a representative of the International Indian Treaty Council, told the *Guardian*, "When you look at what the international standards are for the treatment of people, and you are in a place like the United States, it's really astounding to hear some of this testimony."

Activists told the UN investigators that the police weren't prepared to hold so many people in the local jails. After they were released, protesters still had numbers and charges written on their arms in marker, and some were kept in cages they said felt like "dog kennels."

Protesters were denied basic necessities, including an elderly woman who was diabetic and requested help. Phyllis Young, a member of Standing Rock Sioux tribe, intended to file a lawsuit against North Dakota police, saying, "We embarked upon a peaceful and prayerful campaign," she said. "They were placed in cages. They had numbers written on their arms very much like concentration camps."

Sympathy protests have also spread beyond the embattled state of North Dakota. In New York City, dozens of protesters briefly disrupted the morning commute at the Grand Central Terminal before marching on to the offices of major US banks connected to the Dakota pipeline. In San Francisco, 12 people were also arrested for protesting outside of Citibank headquarters.



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