



Gwich'in Steering Committee

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*"In no case may a people be deprived
Of their own means of subsistence,"*

International Covenants on Human Rights

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Gwich'in leaders appreciate Biden effort to try fixing the illegal Arctic Refuge leasing program, and now call on Congress to repeal it

The Gwich'in Steering Committee recognizes the Biden administration for trying to fix the illegal leasing program that sold off the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas interests. The Gwich'in Nation has repeatedly expressed that these lands are sacred and essential to the Porcupine caribou herd, which has migrated to the coastal plain for thousands of years.

Today's notice of intent from the Biden administration says it will complete a revised environmental analysis of the Arctic Refuge leasing program to try to fix deep-seated deficiencies and legal violations. Only Congress can remove the mandate for a lease sale, however, and it can do so immediately by using the budget reconciliation process--the same process it used to sneak oil and gas drilling into the 2017 tax bill--to repeal the program.

"The Gwich'in Nation is thankful that the Biden administration has stood by its commitment to protect 'Iizhik Gwats'an Goondaii Gootlit' (the sacred place where life begins) and the Gwich'in way of life," said Bernadette Demientieff, executive director of the Gwich'in Steering Committee. "Now Congress must step up and do what's right. The Gwich'in are united with many allies around the country in demanding protection of these sacred lands. The majority of Americans want the Arctic Refuge protected. Allies around the world have stood with us. We will never stop protecting the calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd. We do not have a choice, for this is the foundation of our spirituality and culture. Mash'i' choo to this administration for respecting our human rights and for listening to our voices. Now it's time for Congress to listen and to act to repeal this sloppy and embarrassing leasing program."