

This week: Apaches in court to save their sacred land

Ninth Circuit to hear Apache Stronghold's plea to save Oak Flat from destruction

For Immediate Release: October 18, 2021

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WASHINGTON – Apaches in Arizona will be in federal court this week to save their spiritual lifeblood and sacred site known as Oak Flat from being destroyed by a copper mine that would swallow their holy ground in a nearly 2-mile-wide crater deeper than the Eiffel Tower. If the court doesn't intervene, the government will turn this historically protected land over to a foreign-owned mining company that will obliterate the sacred ground where the Apaches conduct their most important religious ceremonies.

In [*Apache Stronghold v. United States*](#), Apache Stronghold, a nonprofit community organization dedicated to the defense of Native American sacred sites, is asking the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals to stop a crooked land swap with a mining company that will completely destroy the sacred land and devastate the Apaches' religious life. Becket is representing Apache Stronghold, arguing that the destruction of sacred sites is a flagrant violation of the free exercise of religion.

Members of Apache Stronghold, Poor People's Campaign and supporters will be protesting outside the courthouse during the virtual hearing. Details about the protest and hearing are below.

What:

Oral Argument in *Apache Stronghold v. United States*

Who:

Luke Goodrich, Becket vice president & senior counsel
Dr. Wendsler Nosie, Sr., Apache Stronghold

When:

Friday, October 22 at proximately 12 p.m. PST (time may change)

Where:

Protest location (outdoors):
Civic Center Plaza
Larkin St between Grove St and Fulton St, San Francisco
9 a.m. - 1 p.m. PST

Oral argument will be held virtually at this link: [Live Video Streaming of Oral Arguments and Events \(uscourts.gov\)](#)

Attorney Luke Goodrich and Dr. Wendsler Nosie, Sr. will be available for comment immediately following the hearing. Join us for statements live on Twitter [@BECKETlaw](#).

In addition to Becket, Apache Stronghold is represented by attorneys Michael Nixon and Bill Carpenter.

Statements for media use:

“As it was at the beginning of our people with one prayer, one drum and one circle we again must defend our sacred land and our home with one prayer, one drum and one circle,” **said Dr. Wendsler Nosie, Sr. of**



Media Advisory

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Apache Stronghold. “We have worshipped on Oak Flat since time immemorial in reverence just as Abrahamic faiths reverence Mt. Sinai and we will be outside the courthouse to defend and protect our sacred place.”

“The government’s plan to destroy Oak Flat is a tragic reminder of how terribly our nation has treated, and still treats, native peoples,” **said Luke Goodrich, vice president and senior counsel at Becket.** “Such callous disregard of religious practices would never be tolerated for other faith groups, and it is long past time for our nation to provide equal protection for Native Americans and their religious practices.”

Photos © Russ McSpadden

For more information or to arrange an interview with a Becket attorney, contact Ryan Colby at media@becketlaw.org or 202-349-7219. Interviews can be arranged in English, Chinese, French, German, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish.

Additional Information:

- [Media Kit for *Apache Stronghold v. United States*](#) (Images and B-roll. Courtesy of Apache Stronghold members and their families and Robin Silver Photography)
- [Becket’s Brief at the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals](#) (March 18, 2021)
- [Case page for *Apache Stronghold v. United States*](#) (press releases and legal documents)

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*Becket is a non-profit, public-interest law firm dedicated to protecting the free expression of all religious traditions and has a 100% win-rate before the United States Supreme Court. For over 25 years, it has successfully defended clients of all faiths, including **Buddhists, Christians, Jews, Hindus, Muslims, Native Americans, Sikhs, and Zoroastrians** (read more [here](#)).*