

APACHE STRONGHOLD

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Native Religious Sacred Sites on federal land have no Protections from the U.S. Government

The United States Government position today in *Apache Stronghold vs U.S.* in the Appeal hearing in the 9th Circuit Court confirmed that the destruction of Apache Religion is not a concern of the U.S Government and is not an obligation of the U.S., confirming the fact that oppression of Native people is not, never was and will not stand in the way of their actions. "We knew where we stood all along, now the U.S. Government admits that we do not matter and that they own all federal land and the decisions about the land, our connection to it is not of their concern." Dr. Wendsler Nosie Sr, stated prior to the scheduled arguments, " Stay focused, listen to what the United States rebuttal will be." At the concluding press conference, Nosie stated, "You heard it load and clear. In Indian Country, anything on federal land is not safe, our existence has no bearing for we are still considered prisoners of war in this country. When it comes to religion, all religion is threatened, they own all land, and all property, that regardless of what is sacred or holy, it has no meaning. "

Apache Stronghold journeyed from Oak Flat to San Francisco, visiting Tribes and gaining prayers in this religious struggle to stop a foreign corporation from destroying Oak Flat. This was allowed by the U.S. Government through a rider added to the National Defense Authorization Act in 2015 allowing exemptions to laws that protect the Earth, and protect Religious freedom.

The 9th Circuit Court heard arguments whether or not a preliminary injunction will keep the U.S. Government from exchanging the land prior to a decision in the case. The decisions in this case, will affect the definition of "imminent harm" to sacred sites, "substantial burden" on religious rights, prevention of religious exercise, the recognition of a Native American religion to other religions of this world, the ability of Congress to use "plenary power" to bypass their own laws. In essence the allowance of corporate money to buy and influence our Congressmen regardless of the laws set to protect religions. The Courts ruling will either see the Evil for what it is or allow the destruction because the Judges follow those same rules that have brought us to this point (the rules that have allowed them to take without remorse or consequence).

Apache Stronghold attorney, Luke Goodrich explained the days arguments at a press conference following the case, "what you just heard today was oral arguments in the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth circuit and this is the court that is going to decide if whether or not the government can move forward with their plans to turn over Oak Flat to a Foreign owned mining company and allow it to be completely destroyed and the facts in this

case are not in dispute. Oak Flat was Apache land since before the United States existed until the United States government took it by force. Oak Flat is the center of Apache religious existence, it is the site of core religious practices that cannot be relocated, and yet our Government is planning to transfer Oak Flat to a copper mine for complete destruction and end those religious practices forever. So what we were arguing in court today, is that this action by our government is not only unjust but also violates multiple federal laws including the religious freedom restoration act, the free exercise clause of the Constitution and the Government's own treaties entered into in 1852 with the Western Apaches. The United States, our government, the Biden administration, stated that it has complete authority over all federal lands to destroy any sacred sites that it wants and it won't face any scrutiny for that whatsoever. It was a sweepingly broad argument from the federal government and should be deeply disturbing to all Americans and particularly Americans of faith because it's not just Apache Stronghold, the western Apaches and their practices, that are at issue today, the government's position today threatens all people of faith. I think the silver lining from today is that the government's starkness and the brutality of the government's position was on full display. The Judges asked some very hard questions of the government, and the government did not have good answers and the hope that I take away is that the U.S. Government, the Biden administration doesn't have final say, The court is going to have the final say here, and if this court doesn't issue the right ruling, we will have the option to appeal to the U.S. Supreme court and at the end of the day, what the government here is doing is so Egregious and so unfortunate that we have very strong confidence that we are going to prevail. The government is not going to be allowed to destroy Oak Flat and that the grandmothers, mothers and the daughters who have held their ceremonies there, will be allowed to pass that down to future generations and that is good for not only for Apaches but for everybody in this country."

When asked if a bias exists in how other religions are treated as opposed to the Apaches, Attorney Goodrich responded that was an actual question asked today, that if this was St. Patrick's Cathedral and the government took it and destroyed it, the government had to admit that that would be a Substantial burden on religion, but the government took Oak flat and drove the Apaches off the land, now they say that is not a substantial burden, So without question, Bias does exist which is a fact in U.S. History.

The Apache Stronghold thanks all the attorneys for their tremendous work and for all the people that were present for the court hearing. Dr. Wendsler Nosie Sr. stated, "This message goes out to all Tribal leadership, tribal governments, people of this country, we now need to defend. The land within our reservation borders is federal land and our belief that "this is our land" is the complete opposite. Living on Tribal lands is not a security for our future and the controlling government, the U.S. Government is telling us just that. "



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