We stand in Solidarity with Wet’suwet’en People

South Asian Network for Secularism and Democracy (SANSAD), comprising members of the South Asian diaspora living in Canada express our deepest gratitude to the indigenous people of Turtle Island/Canada as guests on their lands and our solidarity with the Wet’suwet’en people in their just struggle to defend their unceded ancestral territories against the extractivist despoliation by corporations aided by the settler-colonial violence of the Canadian state and its judicial apparatus.

South Asians bring with us the history of two hundred years of colonialism. This is a history of extreme violence in the appropriation of the land, destruction of its established systems of irrigation and agriculture and its industry and crafts in the service of colonial commercial and industrial interests causing massive famines that killed tens of millions, creating divisive identities through colonial administrative apparatus and policy that continue to haunt South Asia, creating colonial ways of thought and practice that are reproduced by the inherited system, moving masses of people to serve colonial revenue interests, bestowing on them a legacy of conflict and genocide, as in Assam in India and Rakhine in Burma/Myanmar and leaving in its departure borders marked in blood and a legacy of repressive governance.

Nor is colonialism a matter of the past. It continues both in the institutional heritage of the state, particularly in law and policing, (as in the many draconian laws in India, including laws prohibiting assembly, preventative detention and sedition) and in the on-going practices of internal colonialism. Adivasis (indigenous people) are systematically dispossessed and displaced, their lands drowned by the construction of mega dams, their forests sacrificed to the interest of timber companies, their cultivated lands taken away for the lack of legal documents of ownership, their rivers polluted and habitat destroyed by mining corporations, and their living space taken away whenever needed for the development of real estate or tourism. All this is done in the name of “national interest” and through colonial laws of land acquisition and forestry.

The parallel between the logic of settler colonialism and the internal colonialism in South Asia is obvious despite differences. We recognize the similarity of the oppression experience by indigenous people everywhere and stand in solidarity with them. The logic by which the interest of the settlers or the local elite drives the indigenous people to extinction through displacement must be challenged.

The Wet’suwet’en people are engaged in a principled and courageous resistance against the BC and Canadian government ‘s effort to overrule their hereditary and legally established rights over their unceded territories in the interest of carbon extraction. Their civil disobedience is rooted in the history of the moral struggle against injustice and oppression that has been used all across the world, and famously with great success in India against colonial power. We salute the many people who have courted arrest in this struggle and commit ourselves to soliciting funds for their defense. Many people across Canada have come out in support of this struggle not only because it is just but because this struggle is the frontline in the global struggle against a carbon-based economy that threatens human survival. We demand that all levels of government and the RCMP respect the jurisdiction of the Wet’suwet’en hereditary leadership over their territories and their right to self -determination. We further demand that all charges against those arrested be dropped unconditionally.

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