



**Amnesty International**

**Group 524**

**August 2024**



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**International Day of Peace September Event**  
**Wet'suwet'en Chief Dsta'hyl**  
**Guantanamo Plea Deal Response**

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**Welcome**

Our focus this month is Wet'suwet'en Chief Dsta'hyl of Canada and additional case work. We hope to see you at the meeting August 20 at 6pm.

**Individual At Risk Case**

We are still awaiting a case to be assigned.

**September International Day of Peace Event**

Mark your calendars for this event in North Park on Sunday September 22. See page 2.

**Chief Dsta'hyl**

Wet'suwet'en Nation Chief Dsta'hyl of Canada has been designated as a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty for defending the land and rights of the Wet'suwet'en people. See details on pages 3-4 and sample letter on page 5.

**Revoked Guantanamo Plea Deal**

Amnesty's response to the news of the cancelled deal with those who have been charged in the 9/11 terrorist attack is on page 6.

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Amnesty International Group 524

Meeting Schedule: Third Tuesday of the month, at 6:00 p.m.

Meeting Location: The Commons Residence Providence Heights  
9000 Babcock Blvd.



Contact John Belch ([joheb@aol.com](mailto:joheb@aol.com) or 412-766-1894) for more information on material in this mailing, or visit the Amnesty USA web site ([www.amnestyusa.org](http://www.amnestyusa.org)) and Group 39's Amnesty Pittsburgh web site ([www.amnestypgh.org](http://www.amnestypgh.org)).

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## International Day of Peace

Thanks to Sister Carol's efforts we will be tabling at the International Peace Celebration in North Park's Point Grove on Sunday September 22 from 10am to 1pm where we will have petitions and membership interest sign up sheets along with some free giveaways. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the United Nations General Assembly's adoption of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace and we hope that you can join in the day's activity along with the other organizations represented.

This year's theme is **"Cultivating A Culture Of Peace"**

In a world with rising geopolitical tensions and protracted conflicts, there has never been a better time to remember how the UN General Assembly came together in 1999 to lay out the values needed for a culture of peace. These include: respect for life, human rights and fundamental freedoms; the promotion of non-violence through education, dialogue and cooperation; commitment to peaceful settlement of conflicts; and adherence to freedom, justice, democracy, tolerance, solidarity, cooperation, pluralism, cultural diversity, dialogue and understanding at all levels of society and among nations.





## **Canada: Wet'suwet'en Chief Dsta'hyl declared first Amnesty International prisoner of conscience held in Canada**

Amnesty International has made the unprecedented decision to designate Likhts'amisyu Clan Wing Chief Dsta'hyl of the Wet'suwet'en Nation as the first-ever designated Amnesty International prisoner of conscience in Canada.

Amnesty International considers a prisoner of conscience (POC) to be any person imprisoned or otherwise physically restricted (for example, through house arrest), solely because of their political, religious or other conscientiously held beliefs, their ethnic origin, sex, colour, language, national or social origin, socio-economic status, birth, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or other status, and who has not used violence or advocated violence or hatred in the circumstances leading to their detention. When declaring a person a prisoner of conscience, Amnesty International demands the person's immediate and unconditional release.

"The Canadian state has unjustly criminalized and confined Chief Dsta'hyl for defending the land and rights of the Wet'suwet'en people," Ana Piquer, Americas Director at Amnesty International, said on Wednesday. "As a result, Canada joins the shameful list of countries where prisoners of conscience remain under house arrest or behind bars. With the utmost respect for Chief Dsta'hyl's critical work to protect Wet'suwet'en land, rights and the environment we all depend on, Amnesty International demands his immediate and unconditional release and urges Canada to stop the criminalization of Wet'suwet'en and other Indigenous defenders during a global climate emergency."



Amnesty International has documented the human rights violations experienced by Wet'suwet'en land defenders, including Chief Dsta'hyl, since 2020. Chief Dsta'hyl, also known as Adam Gagnon, is the first person to be sentenced, of four Wet'suwet'en and other Indigenous land defenders found guilty of criminal contempt for violating the terms of an unjust injunction order. The injunction prohibits land defenders from taking actions to defend Wet'suwet'en territory against construction of the Coastal GasLink (CGL) liquefied natural gas pipeline, even if these actions are protected under the human rights to freedom of expression and of peaceful assembly.

The British Columbia Supreme Court granted an injunction order at the request of CGL to prevent land defenders from taking actions to protect Wet'suwet'en territory against pipeline construction, which is being carried out without the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs' free, prior and informed consent in violation of international law. In July 2024, Chief Dsta'hyl was sentenced to 60 days of house arrest on a conditional sentence order.

"I've been convicted for protecting our own land while Wet'suwet'en laws have been sidelined," Chief Dsta'hyl said Wednesday while serving house arrest at his home on Wet'suwet'en territory. "The end goal for us in this struggle is the recognition of Wet'suwet'en law in Canada, and it's unfortunate that the Crown is digging in their heels instead. This fight has been going on for 240 years. We have been incarcerated on the reserves where they have turned us into 'Status Indians.' Now, we are all 'prisoners of conscience' because of what the colonizers have done to us." David Matsinhe, director of Policy, Advocacy and Research at Amnesty International Canada's English-speaking section, said: "Canada's treatment of Chief Dsta'hyl and other land defenders of the Wet'suwet'en Nation is infuriating. The governments of B.C. and Canada have denied the Wet'suwet'en their right to free, prior, and informed consent to projects affecting their land. The Canadian state has violated their right to freedom of movement across their ancestral territory, threatened their traditional way of life, and imprisoned Chief Dsta'hyl for exercising his Indigenous and *Charter* rights. These injustices are painful echoes of Canada's tragic history of colonial violence against Indigenous Peoples."

Amnesty International's declaration of Chief Dsta'hyl as a prisoner of conscience comes amid devastating wildfires in Alberta, California and elsewhere. And the announcement occurred less than two weeks after global average temperature reached new heights, leading scientists at the Copernicus Institute to declare 22 July 2024 the hottest day on record.

Gabrielle Pauzé, Director of Operations for Amnistie Internationale Canada francophone, added: "Chief Dsta'hyl has been convicted for peacefully protecting Wet'suwet'en territory against the construction of the Coastal GasLink pipeline. According to Amnesty International, he should not have been prosecuted in the first place. Indeed, taking peaceful action to defend unceded ancestral land should not be treated as a crime. It is important to remember that Indigenous People are defending natural ecosystems that lessen the impacts of climate change. It is certainly not productive, amid the present global climate crisis, to prosecute them for protecting those ecosystems."

Group 524  
August 2024



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Premier David Eby  
Office of the Premier  
PO BOX 9041 STN Prov. Govt.  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1

Dear Premier Eby and Attorney General Sharma:

Wet'suwet'en land defenders and Hereditary Chiefs have never consented to the Coastal GasLink pipeline project on their ancestral and unceded territory. Allowing construction to proceed without their free, prior, and informed consent disregards their right to self-determination and to decide what economic development takes place on their traditional territory.

The Canadian police (RCMP) have arrested dozens of land defenders during the enforcement of an injunction obtained by the pipeline company. People who have taken action to defend the land from the pipeline should not be criminalized for their activities since the construction should have never begun. Amnesty International raised concerns regarding these incidents with the pipeline company via letters sent and meetings held throughout 2022 and 2023, and received broad responses that did not address specific allegations.

I urge you to:

- Immediately and unconditionally release from house arrest Chief Dsta'yl and drop the charges against the other criminalized land defenders who oppose the Coastal GasLink pipeline;
- Stop construction of the Coastal GasLink pipeline that is cutting through Wet'suwet'en land without the consent of the traditional and federally recognized leaders;
- Stop pursuing other mega-projects on Indigenous territories without genuinely consulting with and obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples.

Sincerely,

Copy to: Honourable Niki Sharma  
Attorney General  
Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4





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## **Amnesty International USA Response to U.S. Defense Secretary Revoking Plea Deal for 9/11 Defendants**

August 3, 2024

In response to U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin revoking a plea agreement that was reached earlier this week, Daphne Eviatar, director of the Security with Human Rights program at Amnesty International USA, made the following statement:

“This is a terrible development. The victims of the 9/11 attacks deserve accountability for the horrendous crimes committed after waiting more than 20 years.

“The defendants, who were brutally tortured and mistreated by U.S. agents and then detained without trial for more than 20 years, deserve a fair judicial resolution of their cases.

“The death penalty should have been taken off the table long ago. It is shameful for the defense secretary after all these years to intervene now to prevent the resolution of this case, at a time when the United States should be making every effort to acknowledge, account for and finally end the abuses of the post-9/11 ‘war on terror’”.

