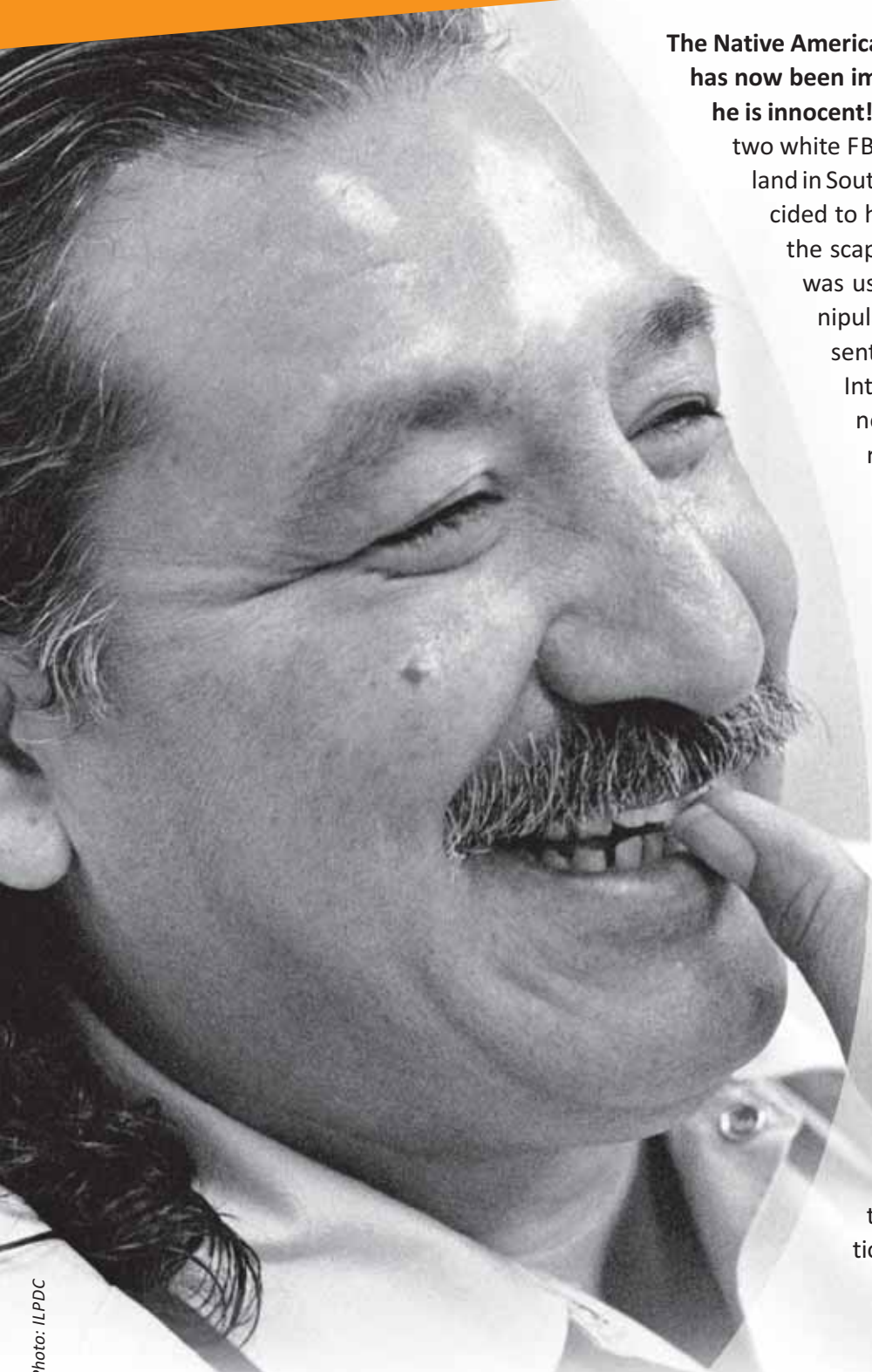


# Free Peltier!

## Imprisoned Since 40 Years, although Innocent



The Native American civil rights activist Leonard Peltier (70) has now been imprisoned for almost 40 years – although he is innocent! He has to pay for the fact that – in 1975 – two white FBI agents got killed in a shootout on Indian land in South Dakota in the north of the USA. It was decided to hold Peltier accountable and to make him the scapegoat. There is proof that false evidence was used against him, and witnesses were manipulated to substantiate the verdict: two life sentences for complicity in murder. Amnesty International (USA) criticizes that there was no fair trial. Please support our human rights organization, the Society for Threatened Peoples (STP), to ensure that the civil rights activist will be released from prison so that he can spend the rest of his life with his family!

### Peltier believed in justice

Peltier was young and committed – and he believed in justice when he joined the American Indian Movement (AIM), a civil rights group that had been trying to resolve the plight of the Native American population in the United States since the 1960s. The situation in the reservations was devastating, the governmental authority BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs) was corrupt, and there were many violations of the internationally binding treaties to put an end to the Indian wars in the 19th century. The AIM had also tried to draw attention to this by means of civil disobedience.

**For human rights. Worldwide.**

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**HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATION** with consultative status at the Economic and Social Council of the UNITED NATIONS and with participatory status at the COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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For example, the “Trail of Broken Treaties”, a motorcade across the USA, and the subsequent occupation of the BIA-Headquarters in Washington DC in 1972 had gotten worldwide attention – just like the month-long occupation of Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge reservation (South Dakota) in 1973.

The authorities were unable to handle spectacular actions like this, so it was decided to label the AIM as a subversive organization, as it had been done with the “Black Power”-movement of Martin Luther King. The FBI infiltrated the civil rights organization, provoked internal conflicts, tried to divide and weaken the AIM and to take out its leadership by intimidation, defamation, physical violence, false statements in court or – as with Peltier – life imprisonment.

## 1975: A shootout in Pine Ridge

After the uprising at Wounded Knee, the Pine Ridge Reservation of the Lakota in South Dakota was in a state of emergency. Dick Wilson, the Tribal Council President, ruled with an iron fist and decided to exploit the raw materials of the reservation land. Tradition-oriented Lakota who were against touching the land of their ancestors were terrorized by armed militiamen, the so-called GOONs (Guardians of the Oglala Nation), who were trained with the help of the FBI. At least 60 Lakota got killed in ambushes and shootings at roadblocks. Most of these murders were never solved.

*Peltier's extradition from Canada to the U.S.A.  
Photo: Shella Steele-flickr-CC BY-NC-SA 2.0*



*Occupation of Wounded Knee, Flickr CC BY2.0*

In the morning of June 26, 1975, the two FBI agents Jack Coler and Ronald Williams drove to the premises that belonged to Harry and Celia Jumping Bull, who were known supporters of the AIM and critics of the president of the Tribal Council. There, Peltier and some friends had set up a camp out of sight of the house, hoping to be able to protect the family from being terrorized by GOONs. The Jumping Bull couple had gone to visit a bull auction. The agents claimed to have followed the car of an Indian activist who was wanted by the police. There was an exchange of fire – and at the end, a young Lakota and the two FBI officials lay dead on the ground.

## Verdict without Evidence

Arrest warrants were issued against four young AIM members, based alleged police murder. They were sought throughout the US. One of the indictments was dropped and two defendants were acquitted at a trial in Cedar Rapids (Iowa). Later, Leonard Peltier was arrested and sentenced to twice life imprisonment on June 2, 1977, in Fargo, North Dakota. If he had appeared in court together with the others, he most probably would have been acquitted too, as there was no clear evidence against him. During his trial, however, exonerating facts and testimonies were suppressed or manipulated. For example, it was concealed that – according to ballistic investigations of the FBI – Peltier's rifle had not been the murder weapon. The main witness, Myrtle Poor Bear, recalled her earlier statement. Apparently, the FBI had pressurized her to claim that she was Peltier's girlfriend and an eyewitness. Before the jury, however, she was not allowed to reiterate her revocation. The court did not allow her to testify.

As there was not enough evidence, the accusation was changed from “murder” to “complicity in murder” after the proceedings – but the sentence remained the same. Thus, the American justice seems to have favored an exemplary punishment for the AIM's resistance and for the unresolved deaths of two FBI agents instead of a just verdict.



Leonard Peltier behind bars, Photo: ILPDC

## Seriously ill in prison

The FBI's manipulations of the court proceedings should be reason enough to release Peltier, but he was imprisoned – and the 40 years in prison have made him a very sick man. He suffered frequent harassment, was put in solitary confinement and was beaten up by other prisoners. He managed to escape a murder plot by fleeing from prison, but was punished with seven more years in prison. Now, only family members and lawyers are allowed to visit him. Journalists are not welcome, and Peltier does not have many visitors. He is imprisoned in Coleman State Prison, Florida, far from his home.

More information: [www.gfbv.de](http://www.gfbv.de)

## Show mercy, Mr. President!

The US laws provide no further possibilities to reopen the proceedings, appeals judge Gerald Healy refused to annul the verdict, and there was no parole (which would not be unusual after long terms of imprisonment), so the only possibility left is to pardon Peltier. In the meantime, even judge Healy and the former Attorney General, Ramsey Clark, stated that they would prefer him to be pardoned – but even the more than 500 human rights organizations and prominent supporters from politics, science and art were not able to make headway.

We won't give up! We won't leave Peltier to himself! The ideals of a young Native American civil rights activist in the United States – who believed in justice for everyone, regardless of skin color, ethnic origin, gender and religion – must become a reality, for him as well! When the South African apartheid regime kept Nelson Mandela in prison for 27 years, there had been a lot of criticism from the western world. But the United States – constitutionally committed to democracy and human rights – have kept civil rights activist Leonard Peltier imprisoned for the last 40 years, for a crime he has not committed!

**Please help Peltier! Write to President Barack Obama and ask him to pardon Peltier! This is the only chance for the civil rights activist to be able to spend the rest of his life in freedom.**

Peltier's vision: a future for Lakota youth rooted in their own tradition.  
Photo: Wendell & Delores Yellow Bull





## Celebrities for Peltier

above, left to right: Simon Wiesenthal, Dalai Lama, Ramsey Clark, Coretta Scott King, Rigoberta Menchu Tum, Nelson Mandela  
below, left to right: Desmond Tutu, Harry Belafonte, Robert Redford, Barbra Streisand

Photos: flickr

More than 500 celebrities from politics and culture have already advocated on behalf of Leonard Peltier: Nobel laureates, parliamentarians of several European Parliaments, judges, lawyers, human rights activists and actors.

In December 2006, **Simon Wiesenthal**, Holocaust survivor and founder of the Documentation Centre of the Association of Jewish Victims of the Nazi regime, asked President Clinton to pardon Peltier since the evidence presented suggests that he was wrongly convicted. In 1995, the **Dalai Lama** expressed his deep concern for Peltier, because the Native American civil rights activist was already suffering from Diabetes. The Dalai Lama wrote: "I wish to support the petition for clemency for Leonard Peltier [...] and I appeal to the concerned authorities in the United States to positively consider the petition on humanitarian grounds". In April 1991, **Gerald Heany** – who had refused to annul the judgement in his position as an appeal judge in 1985/86 – confirmed that the FBI had unjustly tried to incriminate Peltier: "We, as a nation, must treat Native Americans more fairly. Favorable action by the President in the Leonard Peltier case would be an important step in this regard". In June 1997, **Ramsey Clark**, Attorney General under President Johnson in the 1960s, stated: "I think I can explain beyond serious doubt, that Leonard Peltier has committed no crime whatsoever, [...] There was no evidence that he did it, except fabricated, circumstantial evidence [...] Until Leonard Peltier's rights are respected, there can be no peace in our hearts and our minds [...]"

**Amnesty International** has found Leonard Peltier to be a

prisoner of conscience and is calling for him to be released.

Prominent human rights activists such **Coretta Scott King**, widow of the famous civil rights leader Martin Luther King, the Nobel Peace Prize winner **Rigoberta Menchu Tum**, **Nelson Mandela** and **Archbishop Desmond Tutu**, as well as prominent artists and writers such as **Harry Belafonte**, **Robbie Robertson**, **Bonny Raitt**, **Robert Redford**, **Barbra Streisand**, **Peter Matthiessen** and **Kurt Vonnegut** wrote to President Clinton in December 2000: "The overwhelming evidence of FBI misconduct, including the coercion and intimidation of witnesses, the use of false testimonies and the concealment of a ballistics test reflecting Mr. Peltier's innocence, casts grave doubts upon the process under which Mr. Peltier was convicted. As you study his clemency petition during the final days of your administration, we urge you to recognize that Mr. Peltier's ongoing incarceration has become a powerful symbol of the federal government's mistreatment of its indigenous peoples. Granting executive clemency to Mr. Peltier sends an equally powerful message to human rights defenders around the world that the U.S. government is committed to healing a painful chapter in its history with its first peoples."

Even members of the US Congress (1980, 1993, 1996, 2000), the European Parliament (1994 and 1999), members of parliament of the Netherlands (1995), the German Bundestag (1996), Belgium (1997 and 2000), the British House of Commons (1999) and the Parliament of Italy (1998 and 2014) supported initiatives to have Peltier pardoned.



## For human rights. Worldwide.

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