

# Indigenous protesters urge Biden to stop approving fossil fuel projects

## Demonstrators at Washington event want the president to declare the climate crisis a national emergency



Hundreds of Native Americans and other environmental activists rallied against fossil fuels on Indigenous Peoples Day in Washington. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

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Hundreds of protesters led by Indigenous activists from across the country demonstrated in front of the White House on Monday to demand that Joe Biden stop approving fossil fuel projects and declare the climate crisis a national emergency.

The **rally** marks the start of five days of demonstrations calling for greater attention to climate injustices as Native American leaders and tribal members head to the capital to publicize their demands.

The demonstrations are part of **People v Fossil Fuels protests**, organized by a coalition of groups known as Build Back Fossil Free, who are urging the Biden

administration take further action to reduce carbon-producing fossil fuel projects.

Monday's demonstrations fell on a federal holiday in the US that until recently was officially dedicated to Christopher Columbus. However, spurred by national calls for racial equity and decolonization, communities across the country have over the years paired or replaced it with Indigenous Peoples' Day.

The protests were non-violent but dozens of demonstrators were subjected to police use of a long range acoustic device, which **emits** a piercing sound, according to video footage captured by Indigenous campaigners. The use of the device, ostensibly for crowd control, prompted criticism online with users **tweeting**, "Why is police force necessary? [They're] not doing anything!!!!" **and** "There were less police protecting the capital from traitors," in reference to the 6 January attacks.

Outside the White House, the words "Expect Us" were **spray-painted** on the base of a statue of Andrew Jackson, the seventh US president who is infamous for, among other things, leading the violent and lethal repression of Native American peoples in a displacement known as the Trail of Tears.

"Expect Us" is part of the phrase "Respect Us, or Expect Us," which many Indigenous women have been using while demonstrating against the Canadian oil company Enbridge's \$9bn upgrade of an oil pipeline designed to carry oil from Alberta, Canada, to Wisconsin.

The Line 3 pipeline has been met with numerous protests, with police **arresting** more than 900 demonstrators opposing the infrastructure since construction efforts began. Enbridge has reimbursed US police \$2.4m for arresting and surveilling hundreds of demonstrators in Minnesota who oppose the pipeline construction.

The Indigenous Environmental Network – a broad alliance of tribes, Indigenous rights groups, labor organizations and others – criticized Biden for not moving to block Enbridge's Line 3 replacement project.

"If President Biden was committed to honoring the treaties and strengthening sovereignty, he would implement a policy of Free, Prior and Informed Consent by executive authority and act swiftly to mitigate the climate chaos that has

engulfed our communities by ending the anti-Indigenous US legacy of fossil fuel extractivism,” IEN’s statement **said**.

“We have had enough of your empty words,” IEN added, referring to Biden’s first-ever presidential proclamation on Friday of Indigenous People’s Day, in hopes of refocusing the federal holiday toward an appreciation of Native peoples.

“Proclamations don’t erase the police surveillance of **Indigenous peoples** standing for our land and water, beatings, and imprisonment for those trying to stop pipelines, fracking, uranium, and other extractive industries from devastating our ecosystems and our bodies and violating our rights,” IEN said.