

# News release

GREENPEACE

## First Nations activist, Audrey Siegl, supports historic lawsuit against Arctic oil

**18 October 2016 (Oslo, Norway)** – Today, an unprecedented legal case was filed by civil society groups against the Norwegian government for allowing oil companies to drill for new oil in the Arctic's Barents Sea. Audrey Siegl, artist and activist from the Musqueam Nation, was among those supporting the people of Norway in this historic stand.

The case against the government contends that drilling approvals violate the Paris Agreement and a constitutional right to a healthy and safe environment for future generations. This is the first lawsuit to oppose new oil and gas drilling activities based on the commitments made in the Paris agreement, as well as the first time the newly amended Norwegian constitution will be tested.

"I'm backing the people's fight against Arctic Oil because we each have a responsibility to protect what is sacred. All life is sacred," said Siegl, who has made headlines across Canada and around the world in recent years for her work defending Indigenous rights and to end Arctic drilling. "I am in Oslo to represent over 10,000 years of knowing how to care for the land and water that provides all we need to not just live, but to *thrive*."

Last June, from a small inflatable boat launched from the Greenpeace ship *MY Esperanza*, Siegl boldly and directly faced down Shell's 300-foot-tall Polar Pioneer drilling rig as it sailed through Canadian waters off the coast of BC to the Alaskan Arctic. Siegl also joined acclaimed actress and writer, Emma Thompson, and 64 other activists at a protest at Shell's UK headquarters in September last year. Following wide-scale, global opposition, Shell announced it was abandoning its Arctic drilling plans only weeks later, citing a failure to find significant quantities of oil or gas.

The two plaintiffs in the case against the Norwegian government are Greenpeace Nordic and Nature and Youth, a youth organization with branches all across Norway that is connected with Young Friends of the Earth Europe.

The lawsuit demands that Norway uphold its constitutional guarantee for future generations as it is written in **article 112 of Norway's Constitution**:

*"Every person has the right to an environment that is conducive to health and to a natural environment whose productivity and diversity are maintained. Natural resources shall be managed on the basis of comprehensive long-term considerations which will safeguard this right for future generations as well. The authorities of the state shall take measures for the implementation of these principles".*

Norway was among the first countries in the world to ratify the Paris Agreement which is about to enter into force. By ratifying, Norway has promised to ambitiously reduce its emissions and help limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C. At the same time Norway has opened up new oil licence rounds, allowing the state-owned **Statoil** and other oil companies to start a major new exploration campaign in the Barents Sea, where they want to drill up to 7 new exploratory wells in 2017.

*"Signing an international climate agreement while throwing open the door to Arctic oil drilling is a dangerous act of hypocrisy. By allowing oil companies to drill in the Arctic, Norway risks undermining global efforts to address climate change. When the government fails to redress this we have to do what we can to stop it",* said **Truls Gulowsen**, Greenpeace Norway.

“We will argue in court that the Norwegian government has an obligation to keep its climate promises and will invoke the people's right to a healthy environment for ours and future generations. This is the People vs. Arctic oil,” said **Ingrid Skjoldvær** from Nature and Youth.

The Canadian Parliament ratified the Paris Agreement earlier this month (October 5), signaling a commitment to make good on promises to reduce greenhouse gases by at least 30% by 2030, and publish a strategy for decarbonizing the economy by mid-century to keep global warming under 2°C (aiming for 1.5°C) above pre-industrial levels.

The 13 oil companies that have new license blocks in the Barents Sea are: Statoil (Norway), Capricorn and Centrica (UK), Chevron and ConocoPhillips (USA), DEA (Germany), Aker BP (Norway), Idemitsu (Japan), LUKOIL (Russia), Lundin Petroleum (Sweden), OMV (Austria), PGNiG (Norway/ Poland), Tullow (UK / Africa).

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Link to press conference video:

<https://www.facebook.com/greenpeace.international/videos/10154256442098300/>

Images and video available here: <http://media.greenpeace.org/collection/27MZIFJJXOSY5>

Link to the submission to the court:

[http://www.greenpeace.org/norway/Global/norway/Arktis/Dokumenter/2016/legal\\_writ\\_english\\_final\\_20161018.pdf](http://www.greenpeace.org/norway/Global/norway/Arktis/Dokumenter/2016/legal_writ_english_final_20161018.pdf)

**For more information:**

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