

Dutch GBB organisation visit to the National Human Rights Institutions in Geneva, Switzerland
April 6, 2017

The Dutch government treats the province of Groningen as a contemporary colony

Tens of thousands (78.000) damaged buildings have been reported. Several thousands of people (14.000) do not feel safe in their own homes. Thousands of people (4.000) suffer from mental problems. Dozens (30) of families had to rush out of their homes because of unsafe situations indoors. And a hundred houses had to be demolished because they were declared uninhabitable.

And all of this is happening because of the gas extraction in the Dutch Groningen gas field. And the earthquakes it causes. And this process is still going on. It's a disaster in slow-motion. It's continuing. Day after day.

The Province of Groningen has not been treated as a full member of The Netherlands by our successive Dutch governments. The benefits of the wealth from our deep underground, the gas, don't flow back to our Province. We only suffer the negative consequences of the gas extraction.

We feel treated like we are one of the ancient colonies of Holland from the 16th Century - but than a little closer to The Hague en Amsterdam than the former colonies like South Africa, Indonesia, or New York ...

And the consequences of being a modern nearby colony of The Hague, the administrative capital of The Netherlands: damaged homes – time after time -, constantly living with the basic fear of a severe earthquake that threatens not only our homes, but also our lives (and that of our children). House prices have dropped. We can't sell our houses and thereby hardly move. We are like prisoners in our own unsafe prison. Who wants to buy a house in the earthquake zone? Who wants to live there? We suffer the bad consequences. We are not sharing the benefits in one way or another.

As Northern Dutchmen we are proud of our Province of Groningen. We do want to live here. We want our children to grow up here. We want to work, live and recreate in this beautiful, very rich historical and agricultural part of The Netherlands.

But we're faced with a government that is addicted to gas. Fossil fuel is willingly offered by the Dutch gas company (NAM), owned by the multinationals Shell and Exxon-Mobile. These gas dealers (Shell and Exxon Mobil) and gas addict (the Dutch State) continue their gas deals. Like a real addict, the Dutch State is totally fixated on gas and its revenues.

For decades gas revenues were budgeted as National income which could be spent directly. The State, especially the Ministry of Economic Affairs, wants to continue collecting this 'easy money'. It's money, coming from the 'shot' (= gas)... that is providing the (really needed!) grand delicious feeling for this addict.

Until this day this makes our national government an administration that is determined to collect gas benefits without having serious thoughts on how to introduce and use accepted alternative energy sources. Having this mindset, our government is indifferent to all the negative consequences for the people of our province. They pretend they take all the right actions. But in reality it is more like framing to be responsible, while they keep on striving maximizing the gas profits and minimize the costs repairs and compensation money. In this position we are no more than a contemporary, exploited and drained colony of The Hague. We, the people of Groningen, are fed up with this situation.

We want the Dutch government to let us live our life: free from assaulting our buildings, free from fear of losing our homes, our mortgages, our pensions, free from fear of losing our life in the next earthquake - all this because of the gas extraction.

And we want to be compensated for the fact that we were exploited for decades by our own government as a colony. It's more than a debt of honour: We want our life back. We want our future back!

On behalf of the Board of the Groninger Bodem Beweging [1] (GBB),

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Vice President Groninger Bodem Beweging (GBB)

[1] The Groninger Bodem Beweging (Groninger Soil Movement) is a union of several thousands of victims of the effects of gas extraction. The GBB has a wide following among the locals as well as within regional politics.