

End Shell Law in Mayo: Justice for Pat O'Donnell

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On 10th February a Mayo fisherman named Pat O'Donnell was sent to prison for seven months. Pat is 52 years of age and he and his family has fished the waters around Erris, Co. Mayo for five generations. He is a popular and well respected figure in his local community.

For the last decade the life of Pat and his community has been turned upside down. In 2000 significant reserves of gas were discovered off the west coast. In normal circumstances this would be considered a major boon for a local community.

However, these were not normal circumstances.

*Pat O'Donnell at Rossport
Solidarity Camp June 2009*



The Great Oil and Gas Giveaway

In the first instance two senior Fianna Fáil politicians Ray Burke and Bertie Ahern ensured that the oil and gas reserves off the Irish coast, now estimated to be worth in excess of €420billion, were handed over to multinational oil companies. There is to be no benefit to the people of Ireland from these significant discoveries. We will have to buy back our oil and gas from these companies at full market price, depending on them selling the resources within Ireland. They may choose to sell it on the international market instead, giving Ireland no security of supply.

Health and Safety

Secondly, Royal Dutch Shell, an oil company that recently declared profits of €9billion, insisted on processing the gas onshore through an experimental high pressure gas pipeline. In order for Shell to maximise their profits, the health and safety of the entire community in Rossport Co. Mayo is being put at risk.

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Human Rights Abuses

Understandably, given these circumstances, the community rose up in opposition. Despite being vilified by sections of the media, harassed and beaten by both Gardaí and Shell's private security firm IRMS and ultimately sent to prison; this community has continued with their brave stand.

Pat was attacked at sea in the summer of 2009. Four armed and masked men boarded his boat, sunk it and left him on it. Pat and his crewman were lucky to escape alive.

The stance taken by Pat and the local community in Rossport was finally vindicated last December, when An Bord Pleanála ruled that the proposed route of the experimental high pressure gas pipeline risked the lives of those living in close proximity to it.

"All I am trying to do is protect my family and the seas that are our livelihood. My family has fished these waters for five generations - I have no authority to sell the rights to these waters"

Pat O Donnell - fisherman

Criminalisation of the Community

The jailing of Pat O'Donnell is a travesty of justice. He is just the latest victim of a heavy handed approach by the state which has put the interests of Shell and private profit above the interests of its own citizens.

Pat should be released from prison immediately. Shell's project in Mayo should be halted and the significant oil and gas reserves nationalised and used to fund public services.

Please support the campaign to obtain justice for Pat O'Donnell. Contact your local TD. Write letters to the national and local newspapers. Check www.shelltosea.com or www.dublinshelltosea.com for further information. Phone: 086 736 2417

Send letters of support to Pat O'Donnell, c/o Castlerea Prison, Harristown Co. Roscommon.

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