

# Dakota Access Protesters Arrested As Deadline Passes To Depart Camp

**The government had ordered the demonstrators to leave the site by Wednesday afternoon.**

Michael McLaughlin & Josh Morgan The Huffington Post

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CANNON BALL, N.D. — Authorities on Wednesday afternoon began arresting Dakota Access Pipeline protesters who overstayed a 2 p.m deadline to evacuate a camp they have occupied for months. A group of about 100 officers advanced on a group of protesters who had defied orders from the Army Corps of Engineers and North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum (R) to depart from Oceti Sakowin camp. Officers have made “approximately 10” arrests so far, North Dakota authorities told The Huffington Post.



Josh Morgan/The Huffington Post

Authorities in North Dakota arrest a man hours after a deadline passed for Dakota Access Pipeline protesters to leave a camp on Wednesday.

A mediator working with law enforcement and the protesters had announced that any protester who surrendered would face only a misdemeanor charge. A HuffPost photographer at the campsite saw no one accept the deal.

“I came here for this,” said protester Charly Grenau, 33, of Los Angeles after the deadline passed. “I don’t want to be on the other side if people get hurt today. I’m here to stand with them.”

Other protesters beat drums and sang songs as they trudged along a highway and over a bridge on their way to a charter bus that would take some of them home.

The Army Corps and Burgum said health and safety risks necessitated shutting down the camp. Melting snows could flood the area and contaminate nearby rivers if debris and human waste at the camp aren’t hauled away, the officials said.

On Wednesday morning, a few hundred protesters remained and there were still many tattered tents and other structures standing around the muddy, water-logged camp. Some fires had been set to destroy yurts and other abandoned dwellings while a mixture of rain and snow fell.



Josh Morgan/ The Huffington Post

Piles of trash and dumpsters were scattered throughout the site earlier in the day, as the remaining protesters, also known as water protectors, hurried to meet the deadline. The Army Corps denied requests to extend the deadline, according to the Indigenous Environmental Network.

At its height in December, the camp on federal land near the Missouri River bustled with the presence of thousands of Native Americans, military veterans and other environmental activists resisting the construction of an oil pipeline near the Standing Rock Sioux's reservation. The tribe has argued that the 1,172-mile oil pipeline from North Dakota to Illinois violates their territorial rights from an 1851 treaty and that federal authorities failed to properly examine the pipeline's environmental risks.



Josh Morgan/ The Huffington Post

Some protesters are unhappy to leave the Oceti Sakowin camp and believe the claims about flooding have been overstated.

Images showing [clashes with law enforcement and pipeline security workers](#) motivated thousands of Americans to support the tribe by donating hundreds of thousands of dollars or joining Oceti Sakowin and the other water protector camps.

It also [provided a model for environmental protests](#) that essentially went viral as camps sprang up to halt pipelines in Texas, Florida and other spots around the country.

“The camp was the light in the middle of the dark,” said Indigenous Environmental Network organizer Dallas Goldtooth. “It was the fire that fueled so many fights across the country,”

Law enforcement officials had complained of the strain on resources from the extended protests. The state National Guard had deployed 1,421 members — at a cost of more than \$8.75 million — to support the Morton County sheriff's department and in police in Bismarck, where protests have taken place. Former President [Barack Obama's](#) administration handed the Standing Rock Sioux a momentary victory in December when the Army announced it would not allow the developer to build the pipeline near the tribe's reservation.



Josh Morgan/ The Huffington Post

Dan Nanamkin, 49, of Nespelem, Washington, at the Oceti Sakowin campground on Tuesday, the night before a mandatory evacuation of the site.

Following the Army's decision, people began leaving the camp in droves. The Sioux officials also asked them to leave in January as the tribe shifted its strategy from the campsite to the courthouse and worried how protesters would endure a harsh winter on the Great Plains.

The tribe stood by that approach in recent weeks as the Army Corps, under President [Donald Trump](#), [reversed course and issued a permit](#) allowing Energy Transfer Partners to build near the Sioux's water source.

Construction is nearly complete. Energy Transfer Partners said in court filings this week that [oil could begin flowing as soon as March 6](#), ABC News reported.

Before Trump gave the upper hand to the pipeline company, many people went home, though smaller numbers relocated to other camps. They left behind hundreds of tents and other structures and an allegedly hazardous amount of human waste.

A cleanup began weeks ago. More than 230 truckloads of garbage had been hauled away as of Monday, according to [The Associated Press](#).

Afnan Khan, 21, arrived four days ago from Montreal with friends to help clean the campsite.

"I think this movement helped people feel empowered to take back control and to continue this fight in their communities," Khan told HuffPost Wednesday.

Josh Morgan/ The Huffington Post

Water protectors expressed mixed feelings while preparing to depart from the camp that was the focal point of the opposition to the Dakota Access Pipeline.

Officials from several North Dakota state departments announced that they had established a travel center providing bus fare, water, snacks and health assessment to protesters heading home.

Some protesters were unhappy to leave and believed the claims about flooding and unsanitary conditions were overstated. Lewis Grassrope, 39, had been at Oceti Sakowin since August, but returned to his home on the Lower Brule Sioux reservation in South Dakota days ago. He worried that authorities would damage his tent and other property if he waited for the deadline to pass.

He marveled at the collaborative decision-making process in the camp and thought that it had been run well, with huge kitchens, security, a medical clinic and other services.

“It was freedom for everyone who came here and freedom from the way we lived our everyday lives at home,” Grassrope said. “People have been portraying it as an ecological disaster, but it’s still a beautiful place.”

*Photographer Josh Morgan contributed reporting from North Dakota.*

*This article has been updated with new details, including comment from Khan and information after the deadline passed.*