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Congress says Govt should stop, listen and test NT laws for human rights violations

Congress says it will continue to oppose new Intervention laws because they have not been tested for human rights violations as part of its on-going support to Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.

Congress Co-Chairs Jody Broun and Les Malezer said more Aboriginal people are calling for the laws before Parliament to be scrapped, most recently the Yolgnu Nations Assembly, which represents 8000 traditional owners in west, central and east Arnhem Land.

"Here is another significant group of our peoples, directly affected by the laws, who are actually calling this legislation 'racist' in their letter to the Prime Minister," said Mr. Malezer.

"This is a strong and simple message to the Government that these laws must be independently reviewed to ensure they do not breach human rights standards and international obligations."

"The Government has 'willful deafness' on such a fundamental issue, even after critical reports on the Intervention by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Special Rapporteur for Indigenous Peoples.

"Compulsory income management remains offensive and does not support local decision making, governance or self determination," said Mr Malezer.

Co-Chair Broun says while there has always been support for the Government's commitment to additional services and infrastructure, Congress would use domestic and international human rights forums to apply further pressure.

"Congress has an important part to play in supporting our members and we hope that this legislation is not rushed through in the shadow of the federal budget," said Ms Broun.

"There is very deep emotional damage and distrust that continues in our communities since the first intervention.

"I welcome the support of eminent Australians such as former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser and many other individuals and organisations who are joining Congress and our members in opposing these laws.

"I encourage everyone who supports justice and equality to also voice their concerns by sending a letter of objection to the Government," said Ms Broun.

Congress has established an electronic letter campaign on our website:

www.nationalcongress.com.au