Will foreign countries help us!? Natives of Yamal Tundra accuse oil companies of genocide

By Stanislav Gurbin

Residents of the Yamal tundra cannot find justice on the oil and gas industry. The last straw that overwhelmed the patience of the indigenous population was the decision of Gazpromneft-Yamal to lay a gas pipeline along the bottom of the Gulf of Ob. In the summer, during the public hearings, local residents opposed the project, the implementation of which, in their opinion, will destroy all life in the main Yamal water reservoir. However, the subsoil users did not stop it. The tundra people considered such an attitude genocide and wrote an appeal to the UN.

“Locals have a negative attitude to the next project of oil industry workers in the Ob Bay area,” said YamalPRO editorial staff to Eiko Serotetto, who initiated the signing of the appeal, and earlier spoke at a hearing criticizing the construction of the pipeline. He suggests oilmen find alternative pipe laying options. His position is explained by the fact that as a result of the work in the Gulf of Ob, the local population will be deprived of fish and, therefore, livelihood.

Experts brought in by the oil industry, on the contrary, try to convince local residents that work in the water area of the bay will not have a significant impact on the environment.

The main damage to the ichthyofauna occurs during the laying of the pipeline when water is disturbed. It does not kill the fish directly, but the forage organisms perish. That is, the main damage occurs because of diminishing food supply, but over time, it will recover. If they build as planned, the damage would be minimal”, a specialist from the State Fishery Center said at the hearing.

The developers of the document on the environmental impact of building a gas pipeline from JSC NIPIGAZ call the factors of possible anthropogenic and technical impact on the animal world insignificant and of a “moderate nature”. The damage from the construction of the pipeline, they estimated at 951,000 tons of total ichthyomass, while compensatory measures to replenish aquatic biological resources amount to 765 million rubles.

YamalPro’s summary:

The project envisages the construction of a gas pipeline for the transportation of “blue fuel” from Novoportovskoye NGKM (oil and gas condensate field) and other fields of the Yamal
Peninsula to the point of connection to the system of Gazprom’s gas pipelines from the Yamburgskiy NGKM with a capacity of more than 20 billion m3 per year. The length of the pipeline is more than 60 kilometers. Due to unfavorable climatic conditions, soil features and shallow water, a passage channel of 50 meters to both sides of the gas pipeline is supposed to be done along the bottom of the Ob Bay, with a special trench in the places of water freezing.

Having exhausted all opportunities to influence Gazpromneft-Yamal’s plans to build a pipeline, the indigenous people of the Yamal region sent an appeal to the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. In their message, the tundra dwellers wrote about genocide on the part of the oil industry and the lack of response to the requests of the indigenous tundra people to save the last reservoir with white fish. The appeal was published in the Voice of the Tundra group of the VKontakte social network. The majority of readers supported the signatories and called on the initiator of the appeal, activist Eiko Serotetto, to finish the job.

“If we lose this reservoir for the sake of short-term profit of oil lobbyists, then the people who have been living by the reservoir for centuries, are doomed to ruin,” warn local residents. They indicate that they fully agree with Vladimir Bogdanov, Director of the Institute of Plant and Animal Ecology, Ural Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and the ichthyologists of the Yamal Scientific Center:

“During the construction of the gas pipeline, they will destroy the entire Benthos, which feeds the muksun (whitefish) and all other fish. In addition, they will deepen the bed of the river, which will lead to an increase in salt water that comes from the North. Last year, in one of the national villages (Seyakhe), saline water flowed from pipes. So this salt water moves south to the wintering pit in the area of the national village of Novy Port and Yamburg, and in the winter, there are frozen waters from the south, as a result, if the salt-water moves further and connects with the frozen water, all living things under ice will suffocate. Moreover, of course, they will later say on TV that the fish suffocated for natural reasons, and the indigenous poachers are to blame.”

According to the authors of the appeal, even before the construction of the port of Sabetta, scientists warned that there is a big risk of destroying the only wintering pit in the Ob Bay and, as a result, whitefish species, including the sturgeon listed in the Red Book. Several dozens of signatures of residents of the Yamal tundra, who oppose the construction of the gas pipeline, are attached to the appeal.
Tags: "Voice of the Tundra", gas pipeline, Gazpromneft-Yamal, State Fishery Center, Eiko Serototto, fish fauna, Red Book, Yamal news, YaNAO news, appeal, Ob Bay, UN, Osetr, VKontakte social network, environmental damage, Yamal, YaNAO.