



Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches

Hawai‘i Conference United Church of Christ

1848 Nu‘uanu Avenue

Honolulu, Hawai‘i 96817

Phone 808-537-9516

Dear Governor David Ige,

On July 18, 2021, the governing body of the United Church of Christ (UCC) voted and passed “A Resolution Encouraging to End 128 Years of War Between the United States of America and the Hawaiian Kingdom.” The resolution was introduced by the UCC’s Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches (AHEC) that are comprised of 31 Native Hawaiian congregations across the islands. 80 percent of these congregations were established prior to the illegal overthrow of the Government of the Hawaiian Kingdom on January 17, 1893. What was unlawfully overthrown was the government of the Hawaiian Kingdom, but not the country, the Hawaiian Kingdom. Under international law the Hawaiian Kingdom as a State, continues to exist under the laws of war as an occupied State. The resolution:

[C]alls upon all settings of the church, denomination officers, conferences, associations and congregations to live into the 1993 Apology of the United Church of Christ delivered to the Native Hawaiian People by President Paul Sherry;

[C]all upon the United Church of Christ’s General Counsel’s office to listen to and consider recommendations from the Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches, other Native Hawaiian organizations, and Native Hawaiian voices drafting communications to local, national and international leaders and organizations calling for compliance with international humanitarian law and an end to the illegal occupation of the Hawaiian Islands;

[T]he Thirty-Third General Synod of the United Church of Christ reaffirm its commitment to stand alongside and in support of efforts of Native Hawaiians to seek redress and restitution for war crimes of the US against the Hawaiian Kingdom including, but not limited to, the crime of denationalization.

AHEC understands the importance of an accurate history regarding that fateful event in 1893 and what has transpired ever since until today, but through an effective policy of denationalization through *Americanization* by the Territory of Hawai‘i’s Department of Public Instruction since 1906, the national consciousness of the Hawaiian Kingdom in the minds of school children was effectively replaced by the national consciousness of the United States.¹ The English language was also supplanted in this *Americanization* policy. Within three generations, the national consciousness of the Hawaiian Kingdom was erased, and the English language replaced the Hawaiian language. According to Professor William Schabas, a renowned expert on international criminal law and war crimes, denationalization, as a war

¹ David Keanu Sai, “United States Belligerent Occupation of the Hawaiian Kingdom,” in David Keanu Sai (ed.) *Royal Commission of Inquiry: Investigating War Crimes and Human Rights Violations Committed in the Hawaiian Kingdom* (Honolulu: Ministry of the Interior, 2020), 114, accessed February 15, 2022, [https://hawaiiankingdom.org/pdf/Hawaiian_Royal_Commission_of_Inquiry_\(2020\).pdf](https://hawaiiankingdom.org/pdf/Hawaiian_Royal_Commission_of_Inquiry_(2020).pdf).

crime, is defined as the “destruction of the national identity and national consciousness of the population” of the Hawaiian Kingdom, as an occupied State.²

It was through this effective policy of denationalization that we were led to believe that annexation by the United States was welcomed and that the overthrow of the government of the Hawaiian Kingdom was *fait accompli*. Our view of what occurred 128 years ago is now much more informed and interpreted through the prism of international law, and not the domestic laws of the United States that incorrectly portrays Native Hawaiians as if it is an American Indian tribe as a indigenous people within the United States. As the resolution stated in its preamble “the correction of injustices depends upon correct history based upon factual matters, and history is often based upon who writes the history and factual information available.” This shift also was made by historian Tom Coffman in his second edition of his book “Nation Within: The History of the American Occupation of Hawai‘i” in 2009. The book’s original title in 1998 was “Nation Within: The Story of America’s Annexation of the Nation of Hawai‘i.” Coffman explained:

I am compelled to add that the continued relevance of this book reflects a far-reaching political, moral and intellectual failure of the United States to recognize and deal with its takeover of Hawai‘i. The book’s subtitle, the *Annexation* has been replaced by the word *Occupation*, referring to America’s occupation of Hawai‘i. Where annexation connotes legality by mutual agreement, the act was not mutual and therefore not legal. Since by definition of international law there was no annexation, we are left with the word *occupation*.

In making this change, I have embraced the logical conclusion of my research into the events of 1893 to 1898 in Honolulu and Washington, D.C. I am prompted to take this step by a growing body of historical work by a new generation of Native Hawaiian scholars. Dr. Keanu Sai writes, “The challenge for...the fields of political science, history, and law is to distinguish between the rule of law and the politics of power.” In the history of Hawai‘i, the might of the United States does not make it right.³

Like Coffman, the UCC has shifted its understanding of Hawai‘i’s history since its 1993 resolution that incorrectly viewed Native Hawaiians as an indigenous people within the United States to now the majority of the national population of the Hawaiian Kingdom as an occupied State under international law. AHEC also recognizes that other organizations, in particular legal organizations in the United States, have also called upon the United States to immediately comply with international humanitarian law.

These organizations include the *National Lawyers Guild*, which is the oldest and largest progressive bar association in the United States, with more than 6,000 members of lawyers, jurists and legal practitioners,⁴ and the *International Association of Democratic Lawyers*, which is an international non-governmental organization of human rights lawyers founded in 1946 with member associations throughout the world and who has consultative status with the United

² William Schabas, “War Crimes Related to the United States Belligerent Occupation of the Hawaiian Kingdom,” in David Keanu Sai (ed.) *Royal Commission of Inquiry: Investigating War Crimes and Human Rights Violations Committed in the Hawaiian Kingdom* (Honolulu: Ministry of the Interior, 2020), 161.

³ Tom Coffman, *Nation Within: The History of the American Occupation of Hawai‘i* (London and Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), xvi.

⁴ NLG Calls Upon US to Immediately Comply with International Humanitarian Law in its Illegal Occupation of the Hawaiian Islands, accessed February 15, 2022, <https://www.nlg.org/nlg-calls-upon-us-to-immediately-comply-with-international-humanitarian-law-in-its-illegal-occupation-of-the-hawaiian-islands/>.

Nations Economic and Social Committee, which includes the United Nations Human Rights Council.⁵

Both organizations provide a comprehensive legal explanation as to why the Hawaiian Kingdom, as an sovereign and independent State, continues to exist under international law despite the overthrow of its government in 1893, and the application of international humanitarian law, which includes the law of occupation and international criminal law—war crimes. AHEC stands in support of these organizations of legal professionals and rely on their expertise of international humanitarian law.

Therefore, in accordance with the UCC resolution whereby AHEC will provide “communications to local, national and international leaders and organizations calling for compliance with international humanitarian law and an end to the illegal occupation of the Hawaiian Islands,” we support the National Lawyers Guild’s letter to you dated November 10, 2020, urging you, as Governor,

[T]o proclaim the transformation of the State of Hawai‘i and its Counties into an occupying government pursuant to the Council of Regency’s proclamation of June 3, 2019, in order to administer the laws of the Hawaiian Kingdom. This would include carrying into effect the Council of Regency’s proclamation of October 10, 2014 that bring the laws of the Hawaiian Kingdom in the nineteenth century up to date. We further urge you and other officials of the State of Hawai‘i and its Counties to familiarize yourselves with the contents of the recent eBook published by the [Royal Commission of Inquiry] and its reports that comprehensively explains the current situation of the Hawaiian Islands and the impact that international humanitarian law and human rights law have on the State of Hawai‘i and its inhabitants.⁶

Finally, through this resolution introduced by the Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches and passed by the General Synod of the United Church of Christ, the injustices of the past have been addressed. Included in the “Biblical & Theological Rational” for this resolution are the words, “In order for justice to prevail, human laws must mirror God’s law.”

As Governor of the State of Hawaii, you are being asked to do your part to right the moral compass for the continuing injustice.

Kōmike Ho‘okolokolo
Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches

CC: Eric Anderson, HCUCC
Josh Green, Lt. Gov
Cameron Bar, UCC BOD
David Popham, CM
Mitch Roth, Mayor Hawai‘I Island
Michael Victorino, Maui Mayor
Derek Kawakami, Kaua‘i Mayor
Rick Blangiardi, Honolulu Mayor

⁵ IADL Resolution on the US Occupation of the Hawaiian Kingdom, accessed February 15, 2022, <https://iadllaw.org/2021/03/iadl-resolution-on-the-us-occupation-of-the-hawaiian-kingdom/>.

⁶ National Lawyers Guild Letter to Governor David Ige, November 10, 2020, accessed February 15, 2022, <https://nlginternational.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Letter-from-the-NLG-to-State-of-HI-Governor-.pdf>.