

# THE NAVAJO NATION

---

JONATHAN NEZ | PRESIDENT   MYRON LIZER | VICE PRESIDENT



## STATEMENT ON THE EXECUTION OF LEZMOND CHARLES MITCHELL

This is a sad day for family members, relatives, and friends of two Navajo families and for the Navajo Nation as a whole. This evening, the U.S. Bureau of Prisons in Terre Haute, Indiana, carried out the death penalty sentence for Lezmond Charles Mitchell. We offer a prayer for strength and comfort for the Slim family for the loss of two precious lives, their grandmother and granddaughter. To carry this loss for the past 19 years is difficult and we trust they can now turn to healing their family. A prayer also for the Mitchell family who endured the consequences of their son's actions and now have lost their son. We wish there could have been a time for restoring peace and harmony for all involved in this tragic event, but we will not get that chance.

The Navajo Nation's position, from the beginning, was to advocate for the sovereign status of the Nation. Our decision not to accept the death penalty in federal cases remains a Navajo decision, but in this instance the federal government ignored the Navajo Nation. This is an affront to our Nation because we should be the ones to decide these matters. The federal government charged a crime that was added in 1994 to the Federal Death Penalty Act and blindsided the Navajo Nation by using this to sidestep the Navajo Nation's position. We have a court system that is fair and just for all persons. We have laws that protect our People. We have brave men and women on our police force to watch over us. Crimes committed on the Navajo Nation are for us to decide. Our judicial and public safety system considers restorative justice in court cases as based on our custom and traditions of hozho' and k'e. Federal officials may not understand our family connections and our strength in keeping harmony. So, we invite them to meet with us and find an answer to address this important death penalty matter.

The Navajo Nation asked for clemency in Mr. Mitchell's case in changing his sentence to life in prison without possibility of release. This is the same request supported by U.S. Senators, U.S. House Representatives, Tribal Nations, and tribal organization. But our collective voice was ignored. We don't expect federal officials to understand our strongly held traditions of clan relationship, keeping harmony in our communities, and holding life sacred. What we do expect, no, what we demand, is respect for our People, for our Tribal Nation, and we will not be pushed aside any longer.

We thank the many Tribal Nations who supported the Navajo Nation's stand on sovereignty, and we appreciate the Tribal organization's letters advocating for tribal sovereignty. We now call on all Tribal Nations and Tribal organizations to begin a dialogue on a respect for tribal sovereignty, respect for all Tribal Nation, and respect for Native Americans. We are moving forward in this fight and we ask all to join us.

NAVAJO NATION OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT

POST OFFICE BOX 7440 · WINDOW ROCK, AZ 86515 · PHONE: (928) 871-7000 · FAX: (928) 871-4025