

COP15 is a sham

Environmental Quality Protection Foundation

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There is nothing uniting about the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP15). Instead, there is outright discrimination. On Monday, it was announced that the total number of NGO representatives would be limited to 7000 for Tuesday and Wednesday, 1000 for Thursday and 90 for Friday. Access to Bella Center would now require both a primary badge and a secondary pass. When asked why, a UN official replied that she had no idea this many people had registered and that this was suppose to be a "summit." When asked how the 1000 and 90 delegates would be chosen, this UN official was unable to provide an answer.

On Wednesday, all members of Friends of the Earth, the largest environmental NGO in the world, were denied access despite carrying both the primary badge and the secondary pass. This prompted certain NGO representatives inside the Bella Center to stage a sit-in as a form of protest. Eventually, the sit-in turned to a walk out. This chain of event prompted UN officials to forbid all NGOs from entering the building. Outside, NGO representatives (including me) stood in the freezing cold without so much as an explanation as to what was happening. All we were told was that NGOs were no longer allowed to enter the building. When we asked the police how long the ban would be in effect, they said they did not know and were only following orders given by UN officials.

It was later announced that NGOs would no longer be allowed inside the Bella Center for the rest of the conference. According to Yvo de Boer, a top UN official, space is limited inside that Bella Center and government officials have priority over the NGOs. It is puzzling why UN allowed over 45000 people to register for the event if Bella Center can only accommodate 15000 people. But regardless, it is inexcusable how the NGOs have been treated the past few days: forced to wait in the freezing cold for hours, randomly banned without an explanation, and now shut out completely. COP15 was supposed to be a chance for different individuals to come together and work out a solution together. How can these happen when UN unfairly shut out the one group that has been at the forefront of the environmental movement? So much for "we the people," the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen is a total sham.