

For immediate release

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Canada Won't Deal With Women's Human Rights Crisis At Home

Failure to address cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women an international shame, say leading human rights groups

(**Vancouver**) Canada and British Columbia are failing to deal with the human rights crisis of disappearances and murders of Aboriginal women and girls says Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC) and the B.C. CEDAW (*Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*) Group in a recent report to the United Nations.

"The disappearances and murders of Aboriginal women and girls in Canada are a national tragedy, rooted in racism and sexism," says Laura Holland of the Aboriginal Women's Action Network, a B.C. CEDAW Group member. "Aboriginal, women's, anti-violence and human rights organizations have demanded accountability and action from the provincial, territorial and federal governments for more than a decade now. But, Canada has not taken adequate action to improve police response or the conditions that make Aboriginal women and girls vulnerable to violence and unable to escape it."

The Native Women's Association of Canada has documented over 600 disappearances and murders of Aboriginal women and girls over the last thirty years, and half of the murder cases remain unsolved.

"Violence against Aboriginal women and girls is extreme," says Kasari Govender, Executive Director of West Coast Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) and member of the B.C. CEDAW Group. "Homicide rates for Aboriginal women are almost seven times higher than for non-Aboriginal women.

"This is an ongoing crisis," says Govender. "Aboriginal women and girls continue to go missing and be murdered, and their disappearances and murders are dealt with by governments, police and courts as though they just don't matter."

Gail Davidson of Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada says, "Since 2003, human rights treaty bodies have repeatedly called on Canada to take concrete steps to address the high rates of violence, to remedy the social and economic inequality of Aboriginal women and girls, and to provide equal access to the protection of the law and to remedies for violations.

"In the international community, failure to address this human rights crisis has sullied Canada's reputation," says Davidson. "Canada cannot sustain its reputation as a country that safeguards the rights of all unless our governments acknowledge these human rights violations and take concrete, immediate steps to correct them."

LRWC and the B.C. CEDAW Group have asked the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to urge Canada to take effective action immediately.

The report, “Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls in British Columbia and Canada”, has been submitted to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The Committee is reviewing Canada’s compliance with *the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination* in Geneva today.

Find a copy of the report at:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cerd/docs/ngos/BCCEDAWGroup_LRWC_Canada80.pdf>

Lawyers Rights Watch Canada is a committee of lawyers who promote human rights and the rule of law internationally by protecting advocacy rights. LRWC campaigns for advocates who are in danger because of their human rights advocacy, engages in research and education and works in cooperation with other human rights organizations. LRWC has Special Consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

The B.C. CEDAW Group is a coalition of women’s non-governmental and non-profit British Columbia organizations that are committed to advancing the equality interests of women and girls.

The coalition first came together in 2002 to prepare a submission on British Columbia for the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, on the occasion of the Committee’s 2003 review of Canada’s compliance with the United Nations *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*. The B.C. CEDAW Group subsequently made submissions regarding the rights of women in British Columbia to the Human Rights Committee in 2005, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 2006, and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2008, as well as a follow-up report to the CEDAW Committee in 2010.

The 2012 B.C. CEDAW Group includes: The Poverty and Human Rights Centre, Coalition of Child Care Advocates of B.C., Aboriginal Women’s Action Network, Hospital Employees’ Union, Justice for Girls, Vancouver Committee for Domestic Workers and Caregivers Rights, Vancouver Rape Relief and Women’s Shelter, Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres, B.C. and Yukon Region, West Coast Women’s Legal Education and Action Fund.

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