

Aboriginal Women

Murders and Disappearances of Aboriginal Women and Girls

1. Canada accepted UPR recommendations regarding violence against women, and against indigenous women in particular. Canada has not implemented these recommendations.
2. Canada has been urged repeatedly by United Nations treaty bodies to take effective action to address the failed justice system and governmental responses to the hundreds of murders and disappearances of Aboriginal women and girls.
3. Two facets of this problem have been identified by Aboriginal women, families, and non-governmental organizations, These two facets are:
 - the failure of police to protect Aboriginal women and girls from violence and to investigate promptly and thoroughly when they are missing or murdered; and
 - the disadvantaged social and economic conditions in which Aboriginal women and girls live, which make them vulnerable to violence and unable to escape from
4. Both of these issues have been highlighted by United Nations treaty bodies after reviews of Canada, including the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 2006, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in 2007 and in 2012 and most recently the Committee Against Torture.
5. In 2008, after its periodic review, the CEDAW Committee urged Canada to “examine the reasons for the failure to investigate the cases of missing or murdered Aboriginal women and to take the necessary steps to remedy the deficiencies in the system...to urgently carry out thorough investigations of the cases of Aboriginal women who have gone missing or been murdered in recent decades [and]...to carry out an analysis ...to determine whether there is a racialized pattern...and take measures to address the problem if that is the case.
6. At the same time, the CEDAW Committee recommended that Canada “develop a specific and integrated plan for addressing the particular conditions affecting aboriginal women, both on and off reserves, ...including poverty, poor health, inadequate housing, low school-completion rates, low employment rates, low income and high rates of violence...”
7. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women has also taken note of the hundreds of murders and disappearances of Aboriginal women and girls in Canada and the “multi-level oppression that culminates in violence.” Rapporteur Manjoo names among the causes “the disadvantaged social and economic conditions in which aboriginal women and girls live, which make them vulnerable to such violence.”
8. The CEDAW Committee asked Canada to report back on this issue in one year, and it concluded in August 2010 that its recommendation had not been implemented. At the request of the Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA) and the Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC) the CEDAW Committee initiated an Inquiry under Article 8 of the Optional Protocol into the murders and disappearances of Aboriginal women and girls in Canada in October 2011.