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Tehran: 2/18/2023



Individual NGO Submission: for the Universal Periodic Review of the human rights situation in CANADA (2023)

Submitted by: The Institute for the Protection of Women's Rights (IPWR)

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The Institute for the Protection of Women's Rights (IPWR) was established in 2015 and The Institute is a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 2019. In general, the activities of the institution can be described in the direction of supporting women's rights in political, social, cultural, economic and other fields. The most important goals of the institute are as follows: Helping women get to know their rights and assisting them; Empowering women and obtaining gender justice; Combating discrimination and violence against women; Formulating useful suggestions and proposals to achieve women's rights in order to offer Government authority.

This report explains the necessity to take immediate steps to protect women's rights based on national and international commitments. The Institute for the Protection of Women's Rights offers recommendations to improve the implementation of human rights norms in the field of women:

- Recommendations to eliminate violence against women
- Recommendations on the implementation of minority rights

1- Violence against Women

❖ Femicide and Domestic Violence

- ❖ in Canada, it has also been starkly underscored that misogyny works closely together with racism, discrimination, prejudice, and bigotry to differentially impact women and girls. This is not individual racism and discrimination but systematic racism and discrimination which is inherent in our social structures alongside misogyny.¹
- ❖ The overall number of women and girls killed in Canada has not moved significantly down for a number of years. On average, one woman or girl is killed every two and a half days in Canada, according to a report on femicide in the country. The report by the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability found that, in 2020, 160 women and girls were killed in Canada. April was the deadliest month for women and girls in Canada, according to the report, with a total of 26 victims. This isn't a new phenomenon, or a result of the pandemic, as the number of women and girls killed each year in Canada has remained relatively constant²
- ❖ The risk of homicide varies by age. Among females in Canada, homicide rates are highest for girls 11 years of age and younger (40.7 per million population). The second highest homicide rates were found for females 25-29 years of age (17.9 per million population), followed by 18-24 years of age (14.7 per million population) and 30-39 years of age (11.8 per million population). In contrast, homicide rates were highest for males 25-29 years of age (52.5 per million population), followed by 18-24 years of age (43 per million population) and 30-39 years of age (36.0 per million population). In 2015, close to one half (48%) of all solved homicides involving a female victim were committed by a spouse or other intimate partner. Family members (other than a parent) were perpetrators in 22 percent of female homicides, followed by casual acquaintances (14%), parents (6%), strangers (6%), and criminal acquaintances (3%). In contrast, males were most often killed by a casual acquaintance (45%), criminal acquaintance (16%) or a stranger (16%). In contrast to female victims, a much smaller percentage of incidents involving a male victim were committed by a family member (14%), parent (5%), or a spouse or other intimate partner (4%). As such, the motivations and circumstances in which women and men are killed differ significantly, underscoring the relevance of the term femicide. Both female and male victims are killed primarily by male perpetrators.³
- ❖ Beyond the above variations, the risk of homicide is also not evenly distributed across the population for Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups. Indigenous women are at elevated risk of homicide. Based on 15 years of Homicide Survey data (2001-2015), homicide rates for Indigenous women and girls were approximately six times higher (48.2 per million population) than rates for non-Indigenous women and girls (8.2 per million population). Other research suggests that Indigenous women are 12 times more likely to be murdered or missing than any other women in Canada and 16 times more likely than Caucasian women. This over-representation of Indigenous women and girls among homicide victims has been observed across the country, with the highest rates

¹ <https://femicideincanada.ca/callitfemicide2020.pdf>

² <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/one-woman-or-girl-is-killed-every-2-5-days-in-canada-report-1.5350935?cache=%2F7.371190>

³ <https://femicideincanada.ca/about/trends>

found in the territories and in the provinces of Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan. In Manitoba and Saskatchewan, specifically, it has been estimated that Indigenous women and girls are 19 times more likely than Caucasian women to be murdered or missing.

- ❖ the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the plight of women and families experiencing domestic violence in Canada. The discussions uncovered a 20 to 30 per cent increase in rates of gender-based violence and domestic violence in some regions of the country, though data on where the uptick is occurring is not yet available⁴. There is a 22 per cent increase in domestic incidents since stay-at-home measures came into effect March 17 2022.
- ❖ One in three (32%) women and one in eight (13%) men experienced unwanted sexual behaviour in public. For both men and women, younger age and sexual orientation increased the odds of experiencing this behaviour more than any other factor. More specifically, being younger and of a sexual orientation other than heterosexual was associated with much higher odds. One in five (18%) women experienced online harassment in the 12 months preceding the survey. More than 11 million Canadians have been physically or sexually assaulted since the age of 15. This represents 39% of women and 35% of men 15 years of age and older in Canada, with the gender difference driven by a much higher prevalence of sexual assault among women than men (30% versus 8%).⁵
- ❖ Domestic violence carries over into the workplace, threatening women's ability to maintain economic independence. More than half (53%) of respondents who had experienced domestic violence said that at least one type of abusive act happened at or near their workplace. Almost 40% of those who had experienced domestic abuse said it made it difficult to get to work, and 8.5% said they lost their jobs because of it.⁶

❖ Human Trafficking

- ❖ There were 3,541 police-reported incidents of human trafficking in Canada between 2011 and 2021. During this time, human trafficking accounted for 0.01% of all police-reported crime, and the average annual rate was 0.9 incidents per 100,000 population.
- ❖ The number of human trafficking incidents remained stable in 2021, with 552 incidents reported to police compared to 553 the year before (Chart 1). There was, however, a slight decrease in the rate (1.4 incidents per 100,000 populations in 2021 versus 1.5 in 2020). More broadly, the number of incidents of human trafficking increased year over year between 2011 and 2017, there was a notable increase between 2018 and 2019, and then it remained relatively unchanged between 2019 and 2021.
- ❖ There were 2,688 detected victims of police-reported human trafficking in Canada between 2011 and 2021. The vast majority (96%) of these victims were women and girls, while a small proportion (4%) were men and boys. Between 2019 and 2021, there were 1,203 victims of human trafficking. In 2019—prior to the COVID-19 pandemic—there were 411 victims of this type of crime, and the number remained stable in 2020 (410 victims). In 2021, the number of victims declined to 382, marking a

⁴ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/domestic-violence-rates-rising-due-to-covid19-1.5545851>

⁵ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2019001/article/00017-eng.htm>

⁶ <https://ernestines.ca/learn-more/factsaboutviolence/>

7% decrease from 2020 and 2019. In comparison, the number of victims of violent crime in 2021 was 4% higher than in 2019 and 6% higher than in 2020.

- ❖ There were 2,688 detected victims of police-reported human trafficking in Canada between 2011 and 2021. The vast majority (96%) of these victims were women and girls, while a small proportion (4%) were men and boys. Includes victims aged 15 and older who were victimized by current and former legally married spouses and common-law partners. Also includes victims aged 12 and older who were victimized by current and former boyfriends and girlfriends, and other intimate relationships (i.e., persons with whom the victim had a sexual relationship but none of the other relationship categories apply)⁷.
- ❖ About 80% of sex trafficking victims in Canada are women and girls⁸. 30% of all women age 15 or older report experiencing sexual assault at least once and The rate of sexual assault against Indigenous women is approximately three times higher than among non-Indigenous women⁹.

- Minorities Women

- ❖ Canadian Muslim women are not ethnically, culturally or linguistically intertwined, but they are bound by a common religion, that of Islam. Islam is the second largest of the three Abrahamic faiths in Canada, and according to the 2001 census, form a little over 2% of the population. As a group, Muslim women were pushed into the spotlight after the events of September 2001, with stereotypes and myths about Muslim women abound in the media and within the larger Canadian society. Although the attacks were in the United States, Canada felt its aftermath. The ramifications of 9/11 in Canada were wide reaching and have been both negative and positive and have had an immediate impact on Muslims and Arabs in Canada.
- ❖ Islamophobia is an ongoing issue in Canada — the latest figures from Statistics Canada on police-reported hate crimes found that hate crimes targeting the Muslim community increased by 71 per cent from 2020 to 2021.
- ❖ Women are subjected to particular discrimination in the workplace. A study of barriers faced by Muslim women in the labour market concluded that women who wear hijab...do experience discrimination as a result of wearing the hijab...this form of discrimination cannot be separated from anti-Muslim discrimination. Moreover, Muslim females had experienced only a small reduction in unemployment over time. Despite being one of the most highly educated faith communities, they have the highest unemployment rate among the two dozen or more faith communities. Many of those who have jobs do not work in their field of specialization and others hold term, casual, and part-time jobs.
- ❖ Also known as laïcité or Quebec's secularism bill, Bill 21 prohibits Quebec citizens who work in public service from wearing religious symbols while fulfilling their civic duties.

⁷ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2022001/article/00010-eng.html>

⁸ <https://ernestines.ca/learn-more/factsaboutviolence/>

⁹ <https://canadianwomen.org/the-facts/sexual-assault-harassment/>

Bill 21 prohibits religious symbols such as the Muslim hijab in public educational, government and law enforcement spaces. Bill 21 targets racial and religious minorities in Canada. The Bill is a direct attack on citizens' religious freedoms and liberty of expression because it will prevent the ability to work in certain professions. The principles of a diverse democratic state, such as Canada, are supposed to uphold the rights and liberties of every Canadian citizen without discrimination on grounds which include race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and political opinion. It targets religious and ethnic minorities by limiting their access and participation in civil roles. Limiting one's opportunities and occupation solely on the basis of religious attire is a breach of one's religious freedom in a democratic country. Furthermore, limiting citizens who wear visible markers of their faith from working in the public sector prevents diversity in the workplace. ¹⁰

recommendations

- ❖ With the approach of promoting women's rights, develop policies and actions in the fight against violence against women and facilitate their participation in social and political arenas;
- ❖ Continue to take further measures to eliminate the gender based violence;
- ❖ Identify new initiatives to further promote women's businesses and employment, especially for equal income;
- ❖ Continue its activities in line with the adoption of legislative measures in the field of promotion and protection of women who have suffered domestic violence;
- ❖ Take appropriate measures to create comprehensive frameworks of non-discrimination towards women and support women against violence, including domestic and sexual violence,
- ❖ Take steps to identify and amend all laws that have a discriminatory effect against women and girls;

10. <http://www.marl.mb.ca/articles/244-bill-21-targeting-racial-and-religious-minorities-in-canada#:~:text=Bill%20201%20prohibits%20religious%20symbols,government%20and%20law%20enforcement%20spaces>.