

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PUBLIC STATEMENT

AI Index: AMR 20/002/2013

19 September 2013

Canada's Response to the UPR: A Lost Opportunity for Progress and Leadership

Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Canada

Canada's response to recommendations made to it during the review in April fails to demonstrate human rights responsibility or leadership. No new commitments are made. The only recommendations accepted are those the government considers it is already implementing through existing measures. It is very disappointing that in the face of serious, acknowledged human rights concerns in Canada, the government is only willing to continue with the status quo.

Amnesty International notes that Canada has rejected all recommendations to develop national-level action plans and strategies to respond to a number of pressing nationwide human rights challenges. Particularly troubling is the refusal to adopt a national plan of action dealing with violence against Indigenous women in Canada, as recommended by seven states.¹ Similarly Canada has refused to adopt strategies, plans of action or implementation plans dealing with poverty and homelessness,² food insecurity,³ racism,⁴ implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples⁵ and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,⁶ and implementing previous UPR recommendations.⁷

Canada's acceptance of recommendation 128.30,⁸ while not containing any specific commitments, acknowledges the importance of the federal, provincial and territorial governments working together to resolve human rights problems. Accordingly, Amnesty International urges Canada to reconsider its rejection of national strategies and action plans. In particular we urge Canada not to use the relationships between levels of government as an excuse for not adopting such plans.

Background

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Canada on 19th September 2013 during its 24th session. Prior to the adoption of the review outcome, Amnesty International delivered the oral statement above.

¹ A/HRC/24/11, recommendations 128.57 (China); 128.58 (Iran); 128.96 (Switzerland); 128.97 (Slovakia); 128.98 (Slovenia); 128.99 (New Zealand); 129.100 (Norway); and 128.104 (Ireland). 18 other countries more generally called on Canada to act on this grave human rights concern: recommendations 128.83 (Peru); 128.84 (Sweden); 128.85 (Cape Verde); 128.86 (Honduras); 128.87 (India); 128.88 (United States of America); 128.89 (Estonia); 128.90 (Finland); 128.91 (France); 128.92 (Ecuador); 128.93 (Togo); 128.94 (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland); 128.95 (Uzbekistan); 128.101 (Belarus); 128.102 (Indonesia); 128.103 (Montenegro); and 128.105 (Australia).

² Ibid, recommendations 128.124 (Russia, Cuba, Egypt, Sri Lanka); and 128.126 (Malaysia).

³ Ibid, recommendation 128.125 (Brazil).

⁴ Ibid, recommendation 128.37 (Togo).

⁵ Ibid, recommendations 128.60 (Cape Verde) and 128.61 (Mexico).

⁶ Ibid, Recommendation 128.31 (Moldova).

⁷ Ibid, recommendation 128.27 (Togo).

⁸ Ibid, recommendation 128.30 (United Kingdom and Northern Ireland)

Amnesty International had earlier submitted information on the situation of human rights in Canada: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AMR20/008/2012/en/5a3659f9-9cfe-4597-abfa-4047d5653c69/amr200082012en.pdf>

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