

Implement the UN Human Rights Committee's Recommendations

November 3, 2005

(Ottawa) Canadian human rights organizations called on the federal government today to immediately implement the recommendations of the United Nations Human Rights Committee. The recommendations were issued by the Committee at the close of its session in Geneva, during which it reviewed Canada's 5th periodic report on its compliance with the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*.

The Committee's [Concluding Observations](#) can be found at:

http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/docs/CCPR_C_CAN_CO_5.doc

"The Human Rights Committee has extremely serious concerns about Canada's human rights performance," said Vince Calderhead of the Charter Committee on Poverty Issues, "and has identified a wide range of human rights deficiencies as well as providing direction for what needs to be done."

"The Committee is concerned about Canada's failure to respect the right to self-determination of Aboriginal peoples, and about policies that amount to extinguishing their rights," said Ed Bianchi of KAIROS. "It has expressed serious concern about violence and the overt discrimination in the law experienced by Aboriginal women," said Beverley Jacobs of the Native Women's Association of Canada. "The Committee recognizes that to have a real impact on the lives of Aboriginal women and their families, Canada must remove systemic barriers, such as social and economic marginalization and discrimination related to membership and matrimonial property laws."

"The Committee is also concerned about Canadians being sent to torture in other countries, about detention under 'security certificates', about the broad definition of "terrorism" in the *Anti-Terrorism Act*, and about large-scale arrests of demonstrators," said Pierre-Louis Fortin-Legrís of La Ligue des Droits et Libertés.

"The Committee has criticized Canada because of the lack of access to human rights remedies and legal aid, and because of the harmful effects of cuts in welfare and social programmes on women and other vulnerable groups, including African-Canadians," said Margaret Parsons of the African-Canadian Legal Clinic. "It has also criticized Canada for its discriminatory treatment of women prisoners," said Kim Pate of the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies.

"An overarching concern of the Committee, set out in the opening paragraphs of its Concluding Observations, is that Canada has not implemented the Committee's previous recommendations and has no established procedures for responding to the deficiencies in its human rights performance when they are identified by the United Nations expert bodies who review Canada," said Shelagh Day of the Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action. "In effect, the Committee has questioned Canada's honesty and good faith as an implementer of human rights."

“This is an embarrassment. Canada encourages other nations to take human rights seriously but has no procedures in place to correct human rights violations at home,” said Kim Pate of the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies.

“Today, Canadian human rights organizations have written to the Prime Minister asking him to immediately establish a new mechanism for overseeing the implementation of the human rights set out in the international treaties that Canada has ratified, particularly for identifying and correcting violations. We are calling for a review by Parliament of the Human Rights Committee’s recommendations, and immediate implementation of them. In the coming days, we will be making the same request of all provincial and territorial governments, since the responsibility for implementing these recommendations also lies with them. We want to see action by all governments to correct Canada’s serious human rights failures,” said Alex Neve of Amnesty International.

For further information, please contact:

Vince Calderhead, Charter Committee on Poverty Issues (CCPI) (902) 420-3461

Ed Bianchi, KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives (613) 235-9956

Beverley Jacobs, Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC) (613)722-3033
ext.225

Kim Pate, Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS) 613-298-2422

Shelagh Day, Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA) 613-232-
9505 ext.222

Margaret Parsons, African-Canadian Legal Clinic (ACLC) (416) 214-4748

Pierre-Louis Fortin-Legris, La Ligue des Droits et Libertés (514) 849-7717

Alex Neve, Amnesty International Canada (613) 744-7667