



April 18, 2024

The Standing Committee on the Status of Women (FEWO)
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada
K1A 0A6

Re: The Standing Committee on the Status of Women Invites the Public to Submit Written Briefs for its Study on Implementing a Red Dress Alert in Canada

Overview

Amnesty International is an independent global human rights movement uniting over ten million people in more than 150 countries to protect and promote human rights. As part of Amnesty International Canada's human rights mission, we have been following Canada's responses to crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people and monitoring Canada's work on the 231 Calls for Justice proposed in the Final Report on the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. More specifically, in the 2023 Human Rights Agenda, Amnesty International Canada recommended that Canada "develops national databases and alert systems to track disappearances, including but not limited to, a 'Red Dress Alert'". Therefore, we commend the Standing Committee's initial step to work with Indigenous families, organizations, and partners toward the development of a Red Dress Alert System.

A Red Dress Alert System is long overdue. In Canada, Indigenous women account for 24 per cent of all femicides victims despite making up just 5 per cent of the country's female population.¹ Indigenous women are also 12 times more likely to be murdered or go missing than non-Indigenous women in Canada.² Many Indigenous families do not have the capacity, resources or access to search and rescue networks to support them in their efforts when loved ones go missing and are murdered. Families often rely on grassroots initiatives, advocates or organizations for support or develop localized networks or outreach systems.

Advocates and members of the Secwépemc Nation and Amnesty International Canada bring the recommendations below to the Standing Committee's attention in advance of the proposed study on implementing a Red Dress Alert in Canada³:

- A multi-platform Emergency Alert system for MMIWG2S+ that is developed, designed, and implemented by Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ to support families and communities by issuing pertinent data and public information about missing Indigenous

1 Statistics in Canada, "Homicide in Canada, 2021," November 2021, 2022, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2022001/article/00015-eng.htm>

2 "Reclaiming the Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls – Volume 1a", https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Final_Report_Vol_1a-1.pdf

3 This joint brief was prepared with the consent of –and in collaboration with– the aforementioned Indigenous community member(s).

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Peoples and co-ordinates search and rescue responses between family, community and local, provincial and federal policing agencies.

- Any emergency alert system will require education and awareness about the issues experienced by Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people and land and water defenders. Canada must create a repository of reports and studies which can be part of a dedicated website or portal. This digital space can be a meaningful bridge between survivors, communities, organizations, advocates, and volunteers who support MMIWG2S+ searches.
- MMIWG2S+ cases are often underreported or not taken seriously by law enforcement. In many instances, disappearances and deaths are recorded as substance use or 'overdose' cases or medical cases rather than missing persons or murder cases. Accurate disaggregated race and gender-based statistics on missing Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people are imperative for creating a responsive Red Dress Alert system. Data collection initiatives must be designed, developed, and have necessary oversight with Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people and defenders.
- In addition to the creation of a Red Dress Alert System, community-based safety models are often proven to be effective preventative measures. Canada must work with Indigenous Rights Holders and respective communities to move resources away from law enforcement and toward distinctions-based and trauma informed community-led models that offer timely response services, particularly in rural, remote, and mid-sized communities.

Secwépemc Nation advocates and Amnesty International Canada emphasize that these recommendations must be implemented through meaningful engagement and co-creation with Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people, defenders, leaders, and Indigenous-led organizations. We hope that the Standing Committee will set out the steps that will further deepen engagement with Indigenous Peoples across the country - grounded in culturally responsive, distinctions based and trauma informed approaches to ensure their full participation and input in the establishment of the Red Dress Alert and other emergency response systems, in the spirit of reconciliation, decolonization, anti-racism, anti-oppression, intersectionality, transparency and accountability.

Thank you for giving your urgent attention to the crisis of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. We remain available to provide you with more information on the issue, should you require it. Please find attached the contact information of the Indigenous Nation advocates/members, with whom we collaborated on this submission (Appendix 1).

Sincerely,



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