



European Alliance for the Self-determination of Indigenous Peoples

PRESS RELEASE

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International Day Against Violence Against Women

Violence against women has been commemorated annually on November 25 since 1981. In 1999, the United Nations declared this day to be the "**International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women**" - the start of a worldwide **16-day action campaign against gender-based violence**.

Violence against women is the most common violation of human rights: one in three women is a victim of violence. While the #MeToo campaign generated global attention, the public takes little notice of a disaster that has been happening for decades in the middle of Canada - violence against Indigenous women. Indigenous women are twelve times more likely to be victims of sexual violence than the average Canadian woman. Although Indigenous people make up only 5% of Canada's population, 24% of homicide victims are Indigenous women. These are not the trivialized "relationship crimes" - over 80% of perpetrators are white men who have never met the women before.

Indigenous women in North America continue to be victims of discrimination, sexism and systemic violence in the 21st century. Even the Canadian government estimates that some 4,000 Indigenous women have been murdered in the last three decades - the number of unreported cases is believed to be much higher. In its 1,500-page final report, "Reclaiming Power and Place,"¹ published on June 3, 2019, a Canadian commission of inquiry came to a clear conclusion: according to the international legal definition, violence against Indigenous women is genocide.

In many cases, police and judicial authorities are also involved in violence against Indigenous women.² Dozens of legal complaints by Indigenous women against police officers of the Sureté de Quebec, who abused Indigenous women – even under threat of death – led to the establishment of the Viens Commission³, which in its final report⁴ of September 30, 2019, demands an apology from the government for the "systemic discrimination against Indigenous peoples" and the implementation of the "UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples"⁴ (2007), which explicitly calls for protective measures for Indigenous women.

In June 2021, the Canadian government presented a "National Action Plan"⁵ with a two-year delay, which, however, hardly specifies concrete measures or a reliable timetable.

Recent cases of forced sterilizations⁶ (among others in Saskatchewan) also constitute violence against Indigenous women and genocide against Indigenous peoples in the 21st century. In addition, the discovery of over 1000 children's graves near Residential Schools in Canada in the summer of 2021 illustrates how the system of Indigenous assimilation seamlessly integrated into the genocidal policies, leaving behind intergenerational trauma that also exacerbates the vulnerability of Indigenous women.

In the U.S., reports from the Urban Indian Health Institute⁷ and others confirm a similar level of violence against Indigenous women. Here, too, thousands of indigenous women were forcibly sterilized in the 1970s - a trauma suffered not only by the women themselves, but also by their families and communities. With the naming of Deb Haaland as the first Indigenous Secretary of the Interior, the U.S. government also increased its focus on combating violence against Indigenous women, and on Nov. 15, 2021, as part of the White House Tribal Summit, President Biden signed a Special Executive Order⁸ to address the "epidemic" situation of missing and murdered Indigenous people and directed the Department of Justice to develop a strategic plan within the next eight months.

For years, Indigenous people as well as human rights organizations have protested the violence against Indigenous women. The European Alliance for the Self-Determination of Indigenous Peoples is also calling for an end to violence against Indigenous women organising numerous events as part of the 16-Day Campaign.

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On behalf of the European Alliance for the Self-Determination of Indigenous Peoples



European Alliance for the Self Determination of Indigenous Peoples

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- Internationales Komitee für die Indigenen Amerikas Schweiz (Incomindios), Zurich, Switzerland: www.incomindios.ch
- MENSCHENRECHTE 3000 e.V. (HUMAN RIGHTS 3000), Freiburg, Germany: www.menschenrechte3000.de
- Tokata-LPSG RheinMain e.V.; Seligenstadt, Germany: www.leonardpeltier.de
- Verein zur Unterstützung nordamerikanischer Indianer (ASNAI), Berlin, Germany: www.asnai.de

References:

¹<https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>

²<https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/02/13/those-who-take-us-away/abusive-policing-and-failures-protection-indigenous-women>

³<https://www.cerp.gouv.qc.ca/index.php?id=2&L=1>

⁴https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf

⁵<https://mmiwg2splus-nationalactionplan.ca/>

⁶<https://ijrcenter.org/forced-sterilization-of-indigenous-women-in-canada/>

⁷<https://www.uihi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Missing-and-Murdered-Indigenous-Women-and-Girls-Report.pdf>

⁸<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/11/15/executive-order-on-improving-public-safety-and-criminal-justice-for-native-americans-and-addressing-the-crisis-of-missing-or-murdered-indigenous-people/>