

Canada's responsibility in advancing women's roles in peacebuilding and defending human rights

Women are disproportionately affected by violence and militarism; yet women bring unique perspectives and strategies in helping communities and nations put an end to violence. They work tirelessly at creating alternatives rooted in human rights, justice and peace. Regrettably, women are largely absent in peace initiatives and negotiations, which are almost exclusively dominated by men.

In May 2011, as part of its **Women of Courage** program, KAIROS published "**Women's Rights: Instruments for Lasting Peace**" based on research and analysis on gender-based violence and military conflict. Using interviews with our partners, we highlighted the context and the experiences of key women human rights defenders in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sudan, Colombia and the Philippines.

Currently, KAIROS is applying that research in a Canadian tour built around the work of Rebecca Nyagai Yol Kafi, Women's Representative of the *Sudan Council of Churches*; Vernie Yocogan-Diano, chair of *Innabuyog*, an Indigenous women's organization in the Philippines; and Chantal Bilulu from *Héritiers de la justice* in the DRC.

The tour brings these women into dialogue with Indigenous and migrant women human rights defenders in Canada. They are making the connection between gender-based violence in all areas of conflict – be it in civil wars in the Sudan or Congo or the treatment of Indigenous peoples in the Philippines or on the ancestral lands of Canada's First Nations.

Canada's history in supporting women as human rights defenders

KAIROS recognizes that the government of Canada has played an important role in supporting the passage of the first United Nations Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace, and Security (UNSC1325), in welcoming the passage of subsequent resolutions (1820, 1888, 1889 and 1960) and adopting a National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security in 2010.

We also recognize the historic role that Canada has played in providing political and financial support to women's organizations and women human rights defenders working in conflict areas. This critical, long-term support has recognized that community-based women's organizations are often the most effective catalysts for peace.

In this context, KAIROS respectfully makes the following recommendations to the government of Canada:

- ✓ **Implementing UNSC1325** Internationally, Canada has an important role to play in promoting the application of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and the

meaningful participation of women in all aspects of peacebuilding as an effective strategy to resolve conflict and build lasting peace. An essential starting point is the appointment of a senior official to oversee the implementation of Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.

- ✓ **Supporting civil society** The Canadian government needs to increase financial support to women's human rights and civil society organizations working in zones of conflict. An integral part of this support is increased Canadian overseas development assistance to community-based human rights education and training programs for women.

- ✓ **Ending Impunity** Canada must work to end impunity for sexual violence in conflict by
 - supporting, both politically and financially, international justice mechanisms such as the International Criminal Court; and
 - supporting judicial and legal reform; national and international truth, justice and reconciliation commissions; reparations and human rights instruments as important tools for promoting women's human rights and peace.

- ✓ **Holding accountable the resource industry** The Canadian government must establish mechanisms to guarantee that Canadian resource extraction companies operating in areas of internal armed conflict are not contributing to the perpetuation of human rights violations and sexual violence. We call on the Canadian government:
 - to commit to binding, legally enforceable and monitored standards for Canadian mining companies and to end Canadian taxpayer support if violence against women is abetted in their spheres of influence; and
 - to support and promote the "Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations 'Protect, Respect and Remedy' Framework" adopted by the UN process on Business and Human Rights and endorsed by the UN Human Rights Council.



KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives is a joint venture of eleven Canadian churches and religious organizations dedicated to ecological justice and human rights.



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