

June 28, 2017

To: Maryam Monsef, the Honourable Minister of the Status of Women,  
House of Commons Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K1A 0A6  
Email: [Maryam.Monsef@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Maryam.Monsef@parl.gc.ca)

Dear Minister Monsef,

A sincere thank you for meeting with us, along with Brittni Tee, Policy Advisor, last Friday, June 23, 2017; we are especially appreciative for your openness to hearing our story and comprehending our requested goal. That is, specifically requesting **naming non-State torture (NST) as a distinct form of gender-based violence (GBV)**, to eliminate the invisibility of the women or girls so tortured, thus promoting her social inclusion, human rights equality, and her human dignity. This goal would certainly fit into “Canada’s Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence” as you recently announced.

### “IT’S TIME TO RECOGNIZE” and “IT’S TIME TO ACKNOWLEDGE”

As stated in the section of the Strategy titled, “It’s Time to Recognize” and that “everyone has the right to live free from violence”—particular to our meeting and this letter is that for this to occur NST must be recognized as a form of GBV.

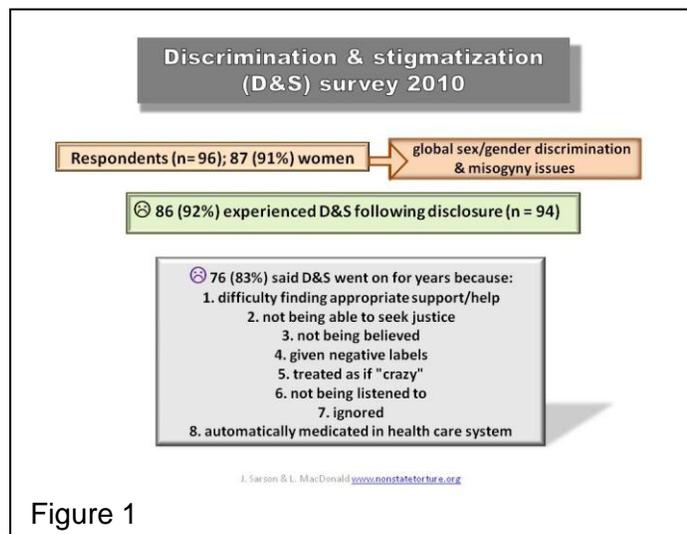


Figure 1

“It’s Time to Acknowledge” section of the Strategy stated that “discrimination, prejudice and intolerance can make it hard for survivors from diverse populations to access appropriate support and services.” This statement echoes the findings of a NST focussed discrimination and stigmatization internet survey we did in 2010. The results are listed in Figure 1. United Nations experts acknowledge, “We need more than ever to protect the fundamental principle that all rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated.”<sup>1</sup> It is a fundamental human rights principle that no one shall be subjected to torture whether perpetrated by State or non-State actors. Canada’s Strategy could become a national and global leading framework by clearly identifying that it is a universal equality human right of women and girls not to be subjected to torture—irrespective of whether the torturers are non-State or State actors—as indicated in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.

### “REPORTING VIOLENCE”

<sup>1</sup> OHCHR. (2017, June 28). UN experts call for resistance as battle over women's rights intensifies. Retrieved from <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21809&LangID=E>

As stated in the “Reporting Violence” section of the Strategy, victimizations are not generally reported to police. Likewise, NST victimization is not reported to police by women or girls certainly because of their fear, terror, and horror as they were threatened and tortured never to tell and if they did tell they were told they would be killed or must commit ‘suicide’. For women who were born to family based NST, human trafficking, and exploitation operators, they lived their whole life believing and enduring such psychological and physical NST. They are also silenced because of a lack of confidence in the police and the justice system which do not acknowledge NST crimes. Based on our experiences, one woman was told by a lawyer that if she spoke about NST in a Canadian court of law that it would be her “blood on the court room floor”; a mother whose adult male child suffered NST had her mentions of NST redacted from her Victim Impact Statement; and several young women fled Canada to the United States to find safety from family based perpetrators. If NST is never named as a form of GBV then it and those so tortured remain invisibilized and silenced. **Naming NST is a key principle to breaking this social discrimination, exclusion, and silence.**

We also note this section of the Strategy lists 16 references. There are no references on NST; therefore, we share some of our publications that could be added. This would help break the social silence about NST gender-based violence:

1. This paper discloses Canadian girls’ stories of NST: Sarson, J., & MacDonald, L. (2009). Torturing by non-state actors invisibilized, a patriarchal divide and spillover violence from the military sphere into the domestic sphere. *Peace Studies Journal*, 2(2), 16-38.<sup>2</sup>
2. This paper is about a Nova Scotian woman who was held captive, tortured, and trafficked by her husband and three of his friends: Sarson, J., & MacDonald, L. (2009b, winter). Defining torture by non-State actors in the Canadian private sphere. *First Light*, 29-33.<sup>3</sup>
3. This chapter is attached and includes excerpts from women in Nova Scotia and the UK: Sarson, J., & MacDonald, L. (2016). Seeking equality—Justice and women’s and girls’ human right not to be subjected to non-state torture (263-281). In J. Scutt (Ed.). *Women, law and culture Conformity, contradiction and conflict* (263-281). Cham, CH: Palgrave MacMillan.
4. This details family based NST human trafficking ordeals, it will soon be available and we will forward when this occurs: Sarson, J., & MacDonald, L. (forthcoming). No longer invisible: Families that torture, traffic, and exploit their girl child. *Oñati Journal of Emergent Socio-legal Studies*.

### “IT’S TIME TO PAY ATTENTION”

This section of the GBV Strategy speaks about roundtables conducted by then Minister of the Status of Women, the Honourable Patti Hajdu. At the July 28, 2016, Halifax Regional Roundtable, NST was identified as one of the gaps recognizing “that gender violence can reach the threshold of non-state torture and these victims have different needs.”<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Available from: <https://issuu.com/icasonlinepublications/docs/psjvol2issue2/20>

<sup>3</sup> Available from: <http://ccvt.org/assets/ccvt-first-light-2009.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Status of Women Canada. (2016, 28 July). Halifax Regional Meeting. Retrieved from <http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/violence/strategy-strategie/0728-en.html?wbdisable=true>

## “IT’S TIME TO ACT”

There is a 38 year Canadian her-story of reports advising that NST occurs. Figure 2 illustrates the many reports wherein torture was identified as being inflicted by non-State actors. Our following two briefs provide greater details:

1. *There Is No Public Safety For Children When Their Torture by Non-State Actors Is Legally Unnamed, Invisibilizing Them As Persons In Specific Need For Protection.*<sup>5</sup>
2. *No One Shall Be Subjected to Torture by Non-State Actors: The Missing Human & Legal Right of All Canadians—Of Women & Girls.*<sup>6</sup>

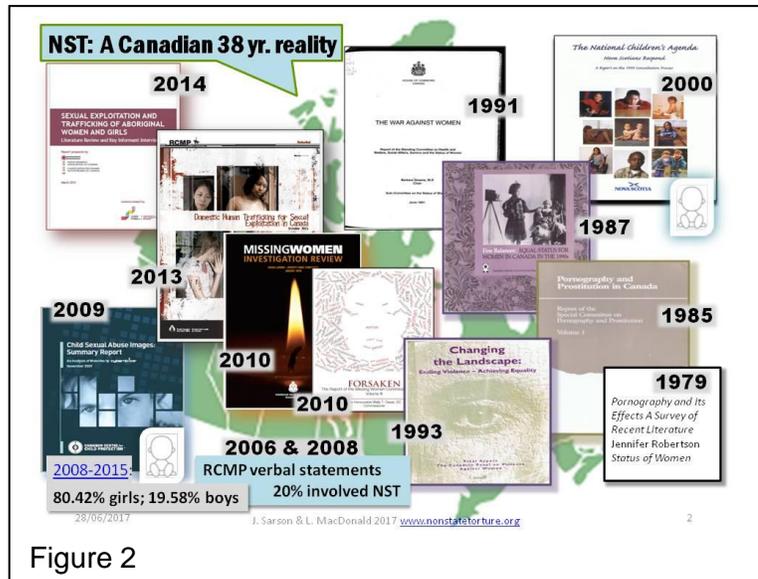


Figure 2

## “IT’S TIME: CANADA’S STRATEGY TO PREVENT AND ADDRESS GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE”

This section of the Strategy identifies that GBV is preventable and impedes gender equality—this is true only if we get real about the degrees of GBV that occur in our relational world. Naming all forms of GBV including NST is what changes norms, attitudes, and behaviours within the policies and practices of social-structural functioning as well as in social and intimate relationships.

**Prevention, support, and promoting responsive legal and justice systems** are listed as the three pillars of the Strategy; however, NST cannot be prevented if it is never specifically named or acknowledged to exist. NST victimization-trauma informed support will not develop, nor will the legal and justice systems be able to be responsive if NST remains unnamed, invisibilizing the truth-telling of the women and girls so tortured.

Figure 3 illustrates what is definitely known and unknown about NST GBV. It is known that NST is inflicted against children from infancy onwards as evidenced in the online child pornographic crime scene images.<sup>7</sup> That NST occurs in families may be supported in the work on psychopaths.<sup>8</sup> NST, particularly sexualized NST, is reported inflicted predominately towards women and girls who are trafficked, prostituted, and exploited into torture pornographic victimization as mentioned in reports identified in figure 2. Our 24 years of professional NST

<sup>5</sup> Available from <http://nonstatetorture.org/files/6914/7887/9363/Nopublicsafetychildren.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Available from <http://nonstatetorture.org/files/1014/5546/8756/NoOneShallbeSubjectedtoNST.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> *There Is No Public Safety For Children When Their Torture by Non-State Actors Is Legally Unnamed, Invisibilizing Them As Persons In Specific Need For Protection.* Available from <http://nonstatetorture.org/files/6914/7887/9363/Nopublicsafetychildren.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Paul Babiak, P., & Hare, R. (2006). *Snakes in Suits When Psychopaths Go To Work.* New York: HarperCollins.

work has involved listening and believing in women's ability to truth-tell of NST victimization, human trafficking victimization, plus other forms of exploitation. However, without naming and collecting specific data percentages will be unknown.

Figures 4 and 5 are illustrations of Sara's multi-forms of NST victimizations.<sup>9</sup> Figure 4 is how Sara illustrated to us the meaning of being born into a NST human trafficking family

system. Drawing was sometimes the only way she could find to express her painful efforts of telling about NST and trafficking victimizations that were organized by her parents beginning when she was about two years of age.

Figure 5 on the next page is a guesstimate of the sexualized NST rapes Sara suffered during 20 years.

Sara explained because of social denial or ignorance she was misunderstood, never believed, or not supported until we received her late night suicidal telephone call. Social denial, ignorance, and disbelief are the ways psychological captivity is maintained in Canadian society. Sara became the roots of 'our story' as we explained during our meeting with you, Ms. Monsef.

When a woman's or girl's story of NST is denied or disbelieved there is no prevention, NST victimization-traumatization informed care does not develop, and responsive legal and justice systems fail her. **Naming NST is a critical inclusive component of the GBV Strategy** to ensure the three pillars—prevention, support, and a responsive legal and justice system—are effective in the promotion of the human right equality of **ALL** women and girls, including the

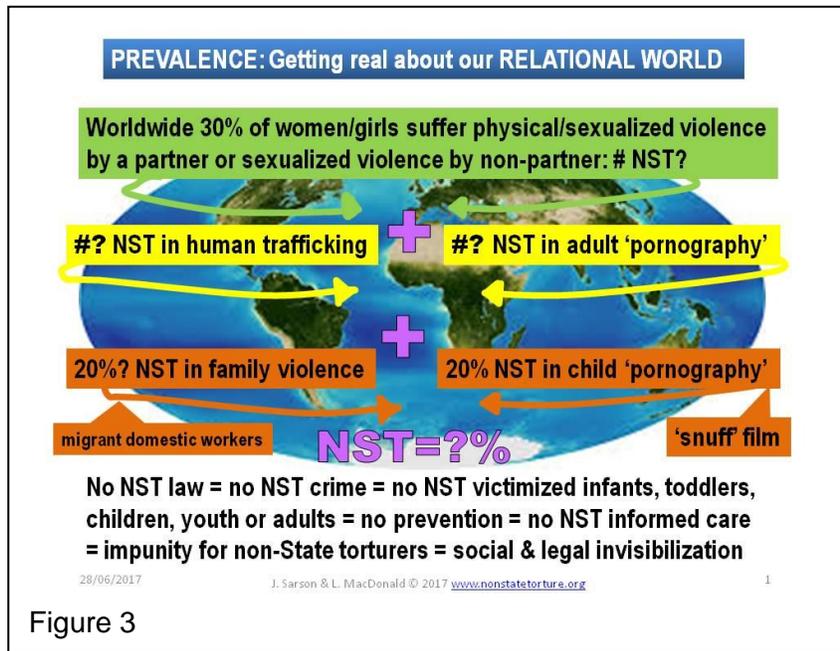


Figure 3

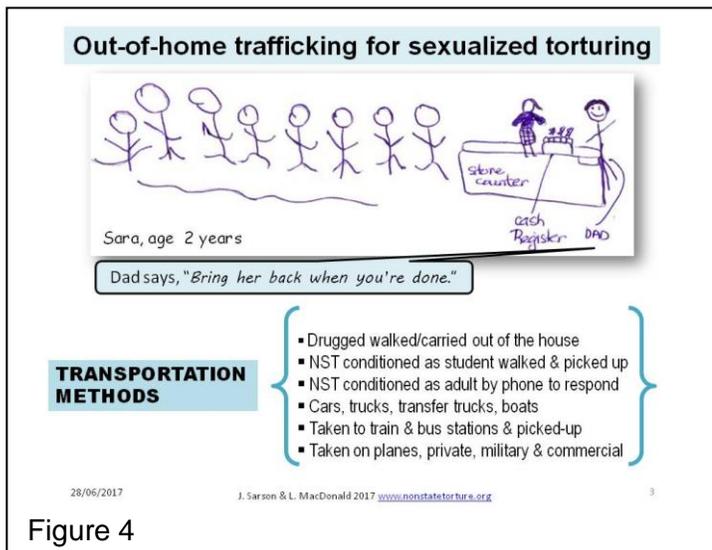


Figure 4

<sup>9</sup> Sara is a Self-chosen pseudonym.

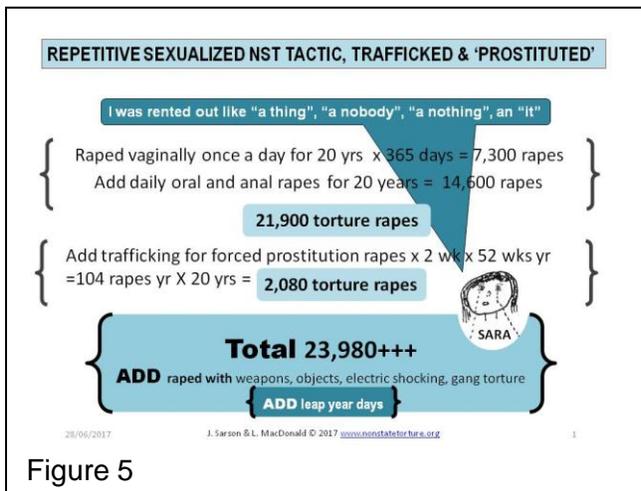


Figure 5

human right of women and girls not to be subjected to the specific violation of torture by non-State actors.

**“FOUNDATION FOR CHANGE”**

The planned establishment of the “Gender-Based Violence Knowledge Centre within the Status of Women Canada” with its goals of coordinating the cross-country work under the three pillars including undertaking “data collection and research in priority areas” applies to naming and sharing “practical knowledge” on NST. As you

know, we and the London’ Abused Women’s Centre are working together. As you mentioned, Executive Director Megan Walker, shared with you the data shown in figure 6 that they have collected women were ‘given’ the right to identify surviving NST when NST was added to their in-take form following our two-day presentation on NST victimization-trauma informed care sponsored by the

Centre. This data illustrates that women are no longer silenced.

Our work is local to international; our latest presentation was at the Nova Scotian

APRIL 2016 TO MARCH 2017

MONTH	SEXUAL ASSAULTS:				OTHER STATS:			
	PARTNER	DATE	STRANGER	CHILDHOOD	PORNOGRAPHY	SEX TRAFFICKED	PROSTITUTION	NST
APRIL	15	7	7	19	8	3	4	4
MAY	13	5	6	16	5	1	4	3
JUNE	12	10	11	17	3	4	4	4
JULY	13	4	9	13	4	1	3	2
AUGUST	13	7	6	11	6	5	5	4
SEPTEMBER	19	4	7	14	6	3	5	4
OCTOBER	13	14	5	16	9	1	3	6
NOVEMBER	12	5	8	14	4	5	6	3
DECEMBER	9	7	6	9	2	1	3	3
JANUARY 2017	16	3	5	16	4	5	5	1
FEBRUARY	17	8	13	18	48	4	4	2
MARCH	11	7	8	13	5	6	5	3
	163	81	91	176	104	39	51	39

Figure 6: London’ Abused Women’s Centre data

conference, *A Training Forum on Sexualized Human Trafficking and Exploitation*,<sup>10</sup> made possible by federal funding. As stated we began advocating for social-legal human right equality for women and girls who survived NST 24 years ago. We are open to sharing how we have come to understand and support women who have entrusted us with their most painful NST, human trafficking, and sexualized exploitation including being prostituted and suffering torture pornographic and ‘snuff film’ exposure ordeals—family based, gender-based violent organized crimes.

We assume that the Gender-Based Violence Knowledge Centre within the Status of Women Canada is also reflecting on the 2030 agenda of nationalizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These call for the need to assess Canada’s existing policies and practices, to identify discriminatory practices in law, to address unequal gendered power in the social

<sup>10</sup> Tri-County Women’s Centre. (2017, June 14-15). A training forum on sexualized human trafficking and exploitation. Retrieved from <http://www.tricountywomenscentre.org/end-demand-forum.html>

construction of reality—within structures and relationships—understanding the significance of appropriate naming of GBV so the data collection analysis is accurate, and to promote transparency so that dissemination barriers are addressed.

The SDGs has the imperative of inclusive development and leaving no one behind.<sup>11,12</sup> This means acknowledging with respect the women and girls who name NST suffered that was/is perpetrated in the domestic or private sphere. **This means naming NST as a specific form of GBV.** This means upholding their human right not to be subjected to torture by non-State actors as figure 7 illustrates.

The very ‘good’ news is that if we can admit as a country that NST is a form of GBV we can act

to address it thus work to prevent such violations—then instead of feeling distraught by such a reality we will need to feel proud for not turning away from the women and girls so victimized! This means we have not left them behind!

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanne Sarson & Linda MacDonald

Cc’ed Bill Casey, MP: [Bill.Casey.A2@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Bill.Casey.A2@parl.gc.ca)

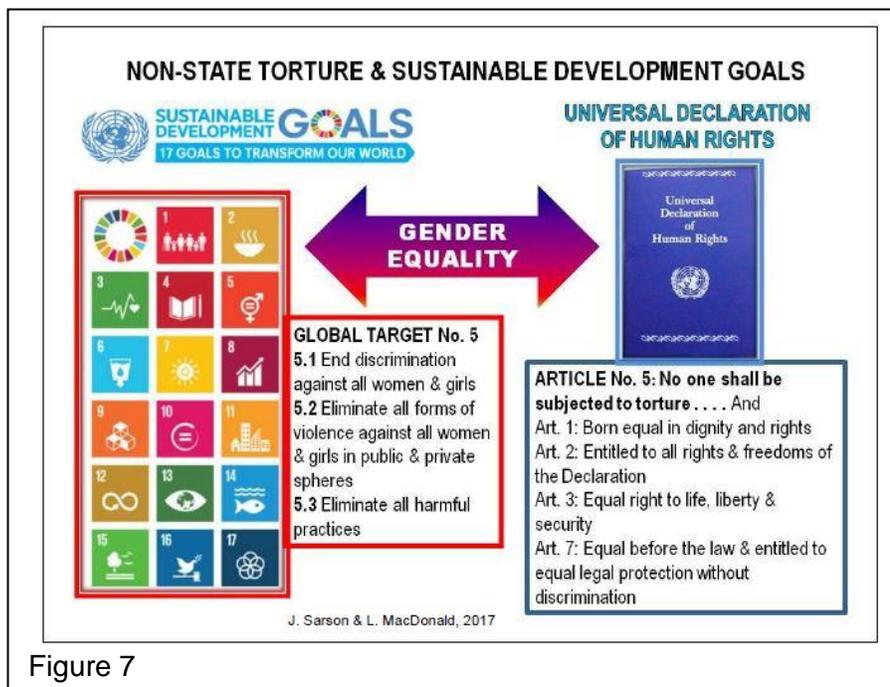


Figure 7



Linda MacDonald, MEd, BN, RN and Jeanne Sarson, MEd, BScN, RN  
 Persons Against Non-State Torture (NST)  
[www.nonstatetorture.org](http://www.nonstatetorture.org) | [contact@nonstatetorture.org](mailto:contact@nonstatetorture.org)  
 361 Prince Street, Truro, NS, Canada B2N 1E4  
 (902) 895-6659 | Cell (902) 956-2117

<sup>11</sup> Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2016). *Leaving no one behind The imperative of inclusive development*. New York: United Nations.

<sup>12</sup> Sarson, J., & MacDonald, L. (2017). Fact sheet: Non-state torture & sustainable development goals. Retrieved from <http://nonstatetorture.org/files/5614/9005/5067/FactSheetNSTSDGs.pdf>