

June 30, 2017

To: Bill Casey, MP Cumberland-Colchester
House of Commons
Room 552-D Centre Block
Ottawa, ON, Canada K1A 0A6

Re:

Report on the Public Health Effects of the Ease of Access and Viewing of Online Violent and Degrading Sexually Explicit Material on Children, Women and Men, of June 2017

Dear Bill,

As Chair of the Health Committee we write to you with a request to share with Committee Members our very specific concerns about the Committee’s position as expressed in the first paragraph of section, Committee Observations and Recommendations (p. 11).

Our concern is that writing and accepting “that it is difficult to distinguish the impacts . . . [between] violent and degrading . . . material from . . . non-violent and degrading . . . material” that is sexualized is an extremely distressing message. For various reasons: (1) How can the manufacturing and sale of sexualized violence and degradation predominately of women and girls be considered a difficult decision to make given the discrimination of sexism, and misogyny involved? (2) How can the degradation of another human being be considered non-violent? (3) How can degradation and violence that is sexualized be considered acceptable as a form of influence in the development of attitudes and behaviours?

Violent degradation of another human being is an element in the definition of torture. This definition is found in the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT).¹ Torture is a *jus cogens* human right violation that people cannot consent to. Women and girls—all peoples—have the human right not to be subjected to torture at any time, in any place, regardless of who the tortures are—non-State or State.² UNCAT clearly says that torture cannot be inflicted for any reason including for discriminatory reasons.

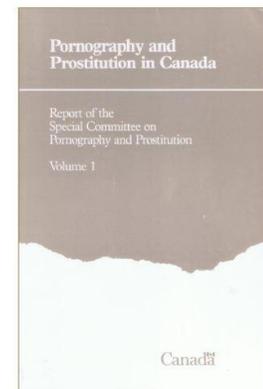


Figure 1

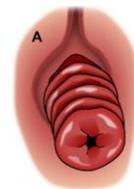
Globally it is known and acknowledged that women and girls suffer social discrimination ‘simply’ because of their sex. It is also known that women and girls as a group suffer sexualized torture when subjected to violent degradation that dehumanizes them including when such acts are pornified. This is decades old knowledge. It is recorded in the 1985 Report of the *Special Committee on Pornography and*

¹ UN General Assembly. (1984). *Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*. New York: United Nations.

² Committee against Torture. (2008). *General Comment No. 2 Implementation of Article 2 by states parties* (CAT/C/GC/2). Geneva: United Nations.

Prostitution, Volume 1 which says, “Women are represented in scenarios of degradation, injury, abasement, **torture** [emphasis added], shown as filthy and inferior, bleeding, bruised, or hurt in a context that makes these conditions sexual” (p.55).³

Speaking of torture, degradation, and injury, the panel received briefs that explained sexualized torture and its consequential long term injuries. One brief spoke specifically about rectal prolapsed a consequence of “rough anal sex” and “anal leakage.”⁴ Why should such anal injury be considered “sex”? Our brief listed some of the consequences suffered by women who were, as children, subjected to all forms of torture by non-State actors.⁵ Besides the harms listed we also were told that repetitive anal torture-rapes resulted in rectal prolapse. Having their internal rectal organ exit their body was considered anatomically normal until learning that it was not, that it was caused by sexualized torture. Please remember an individual cannot consent to torture—non-State torture is what pornographers of torture ‘pornographic’ images inflict, record, and distribute which children get to view. Rectal prolapse injury is now promoted in the torture ‘pornographic’ violent and degrading images as “rosebudding” pleasure. Figure 2 illustrates the coded sexualized torture word of “rosebudding” which is the red mucous membrane rectal tissue that falls out onto the surface of the anal area. As nurses we realize that such injuries have serious physical health consequences and economic costs for medical treatment. How can these also be ‘deemed’ sexual? As to the psychological harms caused by the degradation and violence committed against women and girls, how can this not “be separated out from how sexuality is addressed in society”?



A = Rectal Prolapse
Figure 2

Children exposed to the sexualized torture of other children. It is well documented that young children can be and are exposed to online sexualized pornographic violence;⁶ children may also be viewing children being subjected to sexualized degradation and non-State torture victimization beginning with infants suffering such victimizations. For example, the Canadian Centre for Child Protection data involving children aged newborns to 8 years is the fastest-growing group of children being so victimized. In 2014, of the 15,000 victimization crime scene images of this age bracket of children, 73 percent depicted acts of “bondage” and “torture.”⁷ Additionally, family and friends were the overwhelming perpetrators of these sexualized violent and degrading pornographic crimes against children.

Missing are legal reform recommendations. From our perspective in relation to the Committee Observations and Recommendations section, missing are legal reform recommendations that would modernize current laws, such as:

³ Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution. (1985). *Pornography and prostitution in Canada Volume 1*. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services.

⁴ Kroocmo, D. (2017, January). Should pornography be regulated? Retrieved from: <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/421/HESA/Brief/BR8738875/br-external/RainyRiverDistrictWomensShelterOfHope-e.pdf>

⁵ Sarson, J., & MacDonald, L. (2017, February 7). Victimization effects on those forcedly pornografied and harmed from the other side of the cameras by family based exploiters. Retrieved from: <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/421/HESA/Brief/BR8762940/br-external/SarsonJeanneAndMacdonaldLinda-e.pdf>

⁶ Howse, P. (2015, March 31). ‘Pornography addiction worry’ for tenth of 12 to 13-year-olds. *BBC News*. Retrieved from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/education-32115162>

⁷ Cribb, R. (2015, April 26). Underground child porn trade moving toward youngest victims. *The Star*. Retrieved from:

1. If Canada had a law on torture that is perpetrated by non-State actors this could eliminate the impunity of non-State torture pornographers who inflict, produce, and market violent and degrading torture pornography. If as a society we are to have concern for the violent degradation and sexualized dehumanization of women and girls inflicted by such perpetrators a torture conviction might replace the impunity they presently enjoy.
2. Additionally, consideration to amend the *Criminal Code* suggestions made to the Government of Canada by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, include as one example, developing a legislative solution so that individuals who are convicted of sexualized pornographic crime scenes contribute financially, whenever feasible, to a fund to meet the specialized needs of children so harmed.⁸

In conclusion, we write as women, mothers, grandmothers, as nurses, and as feminists who have for 24 years professionally supported women who, as adults or as children, detail having suffered all forms of sexualized torture perpetrated by intimate family members, who were trafficked to perpetrating sexualized torture rings, and who were forced into child-child or adult-child pornographic sexualized torture victimizations and or exposure to ‘snuff films’.

It is distressful, in our opinion, that the Committee’s report does not advance human right equality of women and girls—that it does not strongly declare that women and girls must not be violently dehumanized and degraded and that such ‘treatment’ must not be considered “sexual.” In fact, we suggest that the Committee’s position is a deterioration since the 1985 Report of the *Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution, Volume 1* which says, “Women are represented in scenarios of degradation, injury, abasement, torture, shown as filthy and inferior, bleeding, bruised, or hurt in a context that makes these conditions sexual.” We say this because in 2017, anal prolapse is recorded for sale by pornographers and perpetrators and considered pleasuring when they witness that this is the impact of their sexualized violence which is coded and objectified as “*rosebudding*.”

We are very disappointed in the report of the Standing Committee on Health. We cannot remain silent. Thus, we share our deep concerns, voicing for the women we know who have been so harmed—so tortured. Tragically, there is no advancement or promotion of their human rights, their human equality, nor their dignity. We are left with the question: “What will such a weak stance on sexualized degradation and violent pornography mean for our country of Canada and the future of children growing up today?”

Sincerely,

Jeanne Sarson & Linda MacDonald

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⁸ Canadian Centre for Child Protection. (2016). *Federal action plan to protect Canada’s children*. Winnipeg, MB: Author.