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November 17, 2017

To: Maryam Monsef, Minister for the Status of Women
Email: Maryam.Monsef@parl.gc.ca
House of Commons, Ottawa,
Ontario, Canada
K1A 0A6

Re: Naming Non-State Torture (NST) as a specific form of Violence against Women and Girls (all children) in the [Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence](#).

Thank you for your letter dated November 1, 2017. We have carefully analyzed it, pulling out the fundamental thematic point which is, correct us if we are wrong, your decision being,

not to acknowledge the human right of Canadian women and girls (any child) who have endured and survived or are presently suffering acts of torture perpetrated against them by non-State actors by not naming non-State torture as a specific form of gender-based violence in the Government's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence.

This decision intentionally dismisses our professional conversation with you on June 23, 2017, where we shared our expertise of 24 years supporting Canadian and global women who identify as having survived NST victimizations. It dismisses decades of evidence delivered to the Government of Canada in reports, testimonies, and court cases detailing that Canadian women and girls are subjected to NST.¹ In 1993, for example, the national study on gender-based violence funded by the Status of Women identified that Canadian women in every region of Canada reported being tortured in the domestic or private sphere.² Public Safety Canada knows that the Canadian Centre for Child Protection has identified through its 2009 analysis of pornographic material that children from infants to age eight were subjected to tortures,³ with girls being predominantly victimized. Acts of NST inflicted by human traffickers are described in a RCMP report on sexualized exploitation of young women,⁴ and a BC police report said sadistic torture was inflicted against several prostituted women by 'johns'.⁵ In the Native Women's Association of Canada Report on Sexualized Exploitation torture victimization committed by non-State actors—by the buyers—is also detailed.⁶ The data you received from Megan Walker, Executive Director of the London Abused Women's Centre, whereby women are reporting NST victimization is also being disregarded.

Considering your appearance at the United Nations October 11, 2017, promoting the empowerment of girls on the International Day of the Girl,⁷ and given from 2017-2021 Canada has a seat on the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, how will Canada address the following 2007 human rights agreed conclusions on the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child of the 51st Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)?

It states in section 14.9, violence and discrimination, to “condemn all forms of violence against girls and take effective legislative and other measures to prevent and eliminate all such violence, including . . . **torture**”⁸

Will Canada say this 2007 outcome document is in error or suggest NST happens to girls in other countries but not in Canada? Will Canada dismiss global knowledge that identifies the aim of torturers—State or non-State—is the destruction of the personality of the person they torture, that it involves intentional misopedic and misogynistic dehumanization of women and girls who are a vulnerable social group in all countries on this planet?

We ask these questions having presented many parallel events at the UN CSW since 2004. We specifically address NST as a distinct human rights violation of women and girls. White, black, brown, and Asian women have asked us to keep talking about NST. An African woman thought that only black African women suffered NST thus it was their fault. What would you suggest we say to them about Canada’s policy on NST and leaving no one behind?

Leaving no one behind means social inclusion not social exclusion and relates to operationalizing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).⁹ If we understand your letter correctly, **not-naming NST in the Status of Women Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence is political-social exclusion.** We created this model to

show the imperative of how naming NST is inclusive to the SDGs. Torture is specifically mentioned as it was in the Outcome Document of 2007.

Exclusionary policies are discriminatory. Is a discriminatory policy being operationalized in the Strategy, by not-naming NST? Does dismissing past and present

evidence-based knowledge that NST victimization is inflicted against Canadian women and girls not indicate a discriminatory exclusion policy? Does this not contradict your statement of, “making a difference in the lives of women and girls . . . to create the inclusive . . . country . . . [to] ensure everyone’s voice is heard . . . ?”¹⁰

The three pillars of the Strategy—prevention, survivor support, and promoting a responsive legal and justice system—**are exclusionary with a not-naming NST Strategy.** NST is invisibilized, therefore not seen to exist as a distinct form of gender-based violence that must be

LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND: THE IMPERATIVE OF NAMING NST

5 GENDER EQUALITY

- 5.1 End discrimination against all women & girls
- 5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women & girls in public & private spheres
- 5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices.

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

- 10.3 Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by **eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices** and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard.

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

- 16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>

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prevented, consequently knowledgeable NST victimization-traumatization informed support will not develop, nor will a responsive social-legal system allowing truth-telling of NST victimization. Accordingly NST harms will continue, including a form of femicide, based on women's disclosures of being 'taught' to kill them-Self if they tried to tell. **A not-naming NST Strategy will add to their pain of feeling socially excluded.**

A review from a human rights equality perspective of the [It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence](#) fact sheet "[It's time to Acknowledge](#)" says that discriminatory policies "made it hard for survivors from diverse populations to access appropriate support and services". This is exactly what **the Government's not-naming NST policy** will assure—that as a diverse population women and girls so tortured will not have access to appropriate support and services, will not report to police because NST crime will be considered not to exist in Canada thus women and girls will be disbelieved or called "crazy".

The fact sheet, "[It's Time to Pay Attention](#)" to consultations and reports **is debasing to the human rights dignity of women who directly reported to this Government surviving non-State torture or reported through the voices of their supporters**,^{11,12} as are statements in the fact sheets "[It's Time to Act](#)" and [It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence](#). Debasing when statements such as, "an approach that is comprehensive, inclusive, and built on solid evidence" and the need for "changes in the *Criminal Code*" to ensure that women and girls who suffer "gender-based violence are treated with the utmost compassion and respect" do not apply to women and girls who have survived NST. A **Governmental policy of not-naming NST** ignores past and present "solid evidence". For example, during the 2016 Government's roundtable discussion NST was named a form of gender-based violence,¹³ and is in the 2017 Standing Committee on the Status of Women report.¹⁴ A **not-naming NST Governmental policy** disregards decades of reports as well as the new data as outlined in above paragraph 2.

A **not-naming NST Governmental policy will corrupt any findings in a proposed [survey on gender-based violence](#)**.¹⁵ Because the Government knows NST victimizations of women and girls occur but takes the position of not-naming them, the survey is knowingly discriminatory and the findings will be dishonest. A failure to name and list NST as a form of gender-based violence in the fact sheet, "[About Gender-Based Violence](#),"¹⁶ will promote the normalization and sexualization of NST in the multi-forms of violence perpetrated against women and girls—such as NST that occurs in relationships, in families, in prostitution, in torture and 'snuff' pornography, and in human trafficking. As a Stats Canada email response said: "If . . . the state is not involved, **it is just regular torture . . .**" (emphasis added) (email communication July 27, 2009). The **normalization and sexualization of non-State torture is the future outcome of not-naming NST as a specific form of gender-based violence in the [Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence](#)** therefore we ask that you:

1. **Reverse your decision of not-naming NST in the Government's Strategy**
2. **Guarantee the full and equal inclusion of women and girls so tortured in the Government's Strategy upholding and being respectful of their human dignity**

With sincere concern,

Jeanne Sarson and Linda MacDonald

CC'd: Bill Casey, MP Cumberland-Colchester: Bill.Casey@parl.gc.ca

Megan Walker, Exec. Director, London Abused Women's Centre: mwalker@lawc.on.ca

Endnotes

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