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OPEN LETTER

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
Palais Wilson
52 rue des Pâquis
CH-1201 Geneva, Switzerland

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Minister of Justice and Attorney General
House of Commons Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

The Honourable Maryam Monsef, P.C., M.P.

Minister of Status of Women
House of Commons Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

April 5, 2017

Dear Minister Wilson-Raybould and Minister Monsef,

Egale Canada Human Rights Trust (Egale) is Canada's only national charity working to improve the lives of LGBTQI2S people in Canada and to enhance the global response to LGBTQI2S issues. We are writing to you with concerns around the serious lack of attention given towards lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (LBT) women and girls and gender diverse people in the Committee's Concluding Observations on the reports of Canada.

Considering the United Nations does not operate a committee focused on sexual and gender minorities, it is imperative that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women address the related but distinct forms of discrimination and violence experienced by gender diverse people.

From our own work with and among LBT women and girls and gender diverse people, Egale is acutely aware of the need for federal strategies and actions that address their experiences of sexual violence, domestic and intimate partner violence, occupational violence, and sex work. Our shadow report provided an evidence-based argument for these needs, and yet was seemingly disregarded or dismissed by the Committee.

Egale works to improve the lives of LGBTQI2S people in Canada and to enhance the global response to LGBTQI2S issues. Egale will achieve this by informing public policy, inspiring cultural change, and promoting human rights and inclusion through research, education and community engagement.

Égale travaille à améliorer la vie des personnes LGBTQ+ en éclairant l'élaboration des politiques publiques, en inspirant le changement culturel et en promouvant les droits de la personne et l'inclusion grâce à la recherche, à l'éducation et à la mobilisation communautaire.

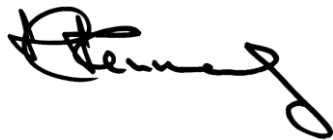
Specifically, the Committee's Concluding Observations make no explicit mention of LBT women and girls or gender diverse people in the sections related to:

- Access to justice, including funding legal aid and the Court Challenges Program;
- Gender-based violence, including shelter and women's services and collecting disaggregated data on gender identity;
- Trafficking and exploitation by prostitution;
- Education, especially in establishing national sexual education guidelines;
- Employment, including sexual harassment in the workplace and barriers of access to employment;
- Health, especially access to abortions, HIV/AIDS treatment, and harm reduction strategies towards substance use; and
- Women in detention, with a glaring lack of consideration for gendered spaces in prisons.

It is clear based on the Committee's Concluding Observations that these issues are not considered priorities when discussing violence against women and gender diverse people in Canada. This lack of explicit attention is not only disappointing but also incredibly harmful as it increases the marginalization already experienced by LBT women and gender diverse people in Canada.

We urge the Committee to re-evaluate their priority commitments and adopt an intersectional lens of analysis which would highlight the ways that violence and discrimination against women and girls in Canada is compounded for LBT women, for gender diverse people, and particularly for those with multiple marginalized identities.

Sincerely,



Helen Kennedy
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