

## **A call to recognize, protect and support women human rights defenders and women's movements**

*Civil society statement on the occasion of the Women Foreign Ministers Meeting*  
21-22 September 2018, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

We, the undersigned organizations, call on Women Foreign Ministers gathered in Montreal, on the eve of the High-Level General Debate of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, to make concrete and accountable commitments to women human rights defenders and women's movements:

- 1. RECOGNIZE:** Explicitly recognize the legitimacy of women human rights defenders and women's movements, and publicly support and acknowledge their contribution to the realization of more peaceful, just, and inclusive societies worldwide.
- 2. PROTECT:** Ensure a safe and enabling environment for women human rights defenders and women's movements, supported by legislation, social programs, public institutions, and accountability mechanisms at all levels.
- 3. SUPPORT:** Support, strengthen and fund women's movements, and defend their right to engage in public life and discourse without fear of punishment, reprisal, or intimidation.

Women human rights defenders include lawyers, journalists, peacemakers, trade unionists, grassroots community activists, politicians, youth leaders and anyone who is a woman peacefully advocating in support of human rights. They are on the forefront of movements to prevent conflict and promote social justice, peace and security.

Women's movements and civil society groups more broadly have always been drivers of social and political progress, and are key actors in advancing greater peace and security across the globe. From women's suffrage and civil rights, to LGBTI rights and the fight against HIV/AIDS, they are the most effective at identifying and advocating for the needs and rights of the individuals and communities with which they work.

Yet women human rights defenders are at a heightened risk of experiencing human rights violations, including forms of gender-based and sexual violence, threats, harassment, and defamation campaigns linked to their status as women. These risks are compounded for those whose race, ethnicity, religion, caste, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, nationality, Indigenous identity, or disability exposes them to multiple and intersecting forms of marginalization.

Women human rights defenders and women's rights movements are frequently targeted because their activism is seen as challenging traditional gender norms, such as

through working to defend sexual and reproductive health and rights; the human rights of women and girls; or the environment, land, and territory.

Women human rights defenders and women's movements' contributions to public debate and decision-making should be celebrated, not criminalized, and recognized and supported by states. This requires the adoption and implementation of legislation and systems of justice and accountability that recognize and protect women human rights defenders, as well as policies and funding mechanisms that promote their active, free, and meaningful participation in the development, implementation and monitoring of public policy.

Welcoming the precedent-setting nature of this Women Foreign Ministers Meeting, and the collective power of your voices, we call upon you to reference the above points and commit to concrete actions in your country's statement during the High-Level General Debate during the upcoming United Nations General Assembly.

**Endorsed by:**

**Canadian Organizations**

1. Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada
2. Aide International à l'Enfance
3. Alberta Pro-Choice Coalition
4. Association Québécoise des Organismes de Coopération Internationale (AQOCI)
5. Barbra Schlifer Clinic
6. Canada Council for Global Co-operation
7. Canada Partnership for Women and Children's Health
8. Canada Women's Foundation
9. Canadian Federation of University Women
10. Canadian Union of Public Employees
11. CARE Canada
12. Catholics for Choice Canada
13. Child Care Now - Un Enfant Une Place
14. Coady Global Institute
15. Comité de solidarité/Trois-Rivières
16. Community Society to End Poverty-Nova Scotia
17. CSI-Corcovado
18. Everywoman's Health Centre
19. Fédération du Québec pour le Planning des Naissances
20. Federation of Medical Women of Canada
21. FEM International
22. Global Women's Rights Project
23. Greenpeace Canada
24. Guelph Resource Centre for Gender Empowerment and Diversity

25. Human Rights Research and Education Centre, University of Ottawa
26. Humanité & Inclusion
27. Inter Pares
28. L'Association des religieuses pour les Droit des Femmes
29. Migrante-Ottawa
30. Mines Action Canada
31. MiningWatch Canada
32. Montreal Center for Genocide and Human Rights Studies
33. Native Women's Association of Canada
34. Nobel Women's Initiative
35. ONE Canada
36. Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants
37. Pacific Peoples' Partnership
38. Pax Christi Toronto
39. PEI Family Violence Prevention Services
40. Plan Global Canada
41. Projet Accompagnement Québec-Guatemala
42. Public Service Alliance of Canada
43. Sisters Trust - Canada
44. Soeurs auxiliaires du Québec
45. South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario
46. Terre Sans Frontières
47. The Grandmothers Advocacy Network
48. The MATCH Global Women's Fund
49. The United Church of Canada / L'Église Unie du Canada
50. The White Helmets Canada
51. The World Federalist Movement - Canada
52. The WPS Group
53. Unifor
54. USC Canada
55. Veterinarians without Borders Canada
56. Village Monde
57. West Coast LEAF
58. Women's Shelters Canada / Hébergement femmes Canada
59. World University Service of Canada
60. World Vision Canada

### **Global Organizations**

1. Advocacy and Legal Initiatives
2. Afghan Women's Skills and Development Center
3. AFTURD
4. Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center – Hurights Osaka

5. Associazione Italiana Donne Per Lo Sviluppo / Italian Association for Women in Development
6. Al Firdaws Society
7. Allamin Foundation for Peace and Development
8. Alliance for Choice
9. ALRANZ Abortion Rights Aotearoa
10. ALTSEAN
11. Amnesty International
12. Associação para a Cooperação sobre População e Desenvolvimento
13. Association of War Affected Women
14. Ataa al Kheir for Charity and Awareness Work
15. Center for Democratic Education
16. Center for Health and Gender Equity
17. Center for Supporters of Human Rights
18. Centre for International Studies and Cooperation
19. CISS / International Cooperation South South
20. Coast Education Centre
21. CODEPINK for Peace
22. Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights
23. CUSO Global
24. Equilibres et Populations
25. European Women's Lobby / Lobby Européen des Femmes
26. Federación de Planificación Familiar Eslatal
27. Federation des Femmes du Quebec
28. Federation of Muslim Women Association in Nigeria
29. FONDO LUNARIA
30. Fonds pour les Femmes Congolaises
31. Front Line Defenders
32. Gbowe Peace Foundation Africa
33. Gender Action for Peace and Security - UK
34. Global Campaign for Women's Right to Safe Abortion
35. Global Center for Research on Women
36. Global Center on Cooperative Security
37. Global Civil Society Action
38. Global Fund for Women
39. Global Justice Center
40. Human Rights Watch
41. INPADE-FOCO Foro Ciudadano de Participación por la Justicia y los DDHH
42. Ipas
43. Jagori Rural Trust
44. Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice
45. JOICFP
46. Just Associates (JASS)
47. Justice, Gender and Human Rights Association

48. Libyan Women Forum
49. Liga Internacional de Mujeres por la Paz y la Libertad
50. MADRE
51. Medica Mondiale
52. Mediterranean Women's Fund
53. Mercy Corps
54. National Council of German Women's Organizations (Deutscher Frauenrat)
55. Neem Foundation
56. Ohana Koa – Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific
57. Oil Change International
58. Osservatorio solidarietà della Carta di Milano
59. OXFAM
60. PAIMAN Alumni Trust
61. Peace Track Initiative
62. Peace X Peace
63. PeaceWomen Across the Globe
64. PRO.DO.C.S
65. Promundo-US
66. Prospera Global Network of Women's Funds
67. Publish What You Pay
68. Qadims Lumiere
69. Realizing Sexual and Reproductive Justice Alliance
70. Reconstruction Women's Fund
71. Rescue Me
72. Sisters Arab Forum for Human Rights
73. Slovak-Czech Women's Fund
74. Solidarietà e Cooperazione – CIPSI
75. Solidarité Feminine pour la Paix et de Development Integral
76. Stop Rape Italia
77. Taso Foundation
78. Terra Nuova Italy
79. Tevgera Jinen Azad/Free Women's Movement from Turkey and Kurdistan
80. The Coalition of Finnish Women's Associations
81. The END FGM European Network
82. The Gender & Development Network
83. Uhuru Community Development Project
84. Ukrainian Women's Fund
85. UNISON
86. Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights
87. URGENT ACTION FUND OF Latin America and the Spanish-Speaking Caribbean
88. Wi'am Palestinian Conflict Transformation Center
89. Witness Somalia
90. Womankind Worldwide
91. Women Cross DMZ

92. Women Deliver
93. Women for Afghan Women
94. Women for Development NGO, Armenia - Women's Alliance for Security Leadership
95. Women for Women's Human Rights
96. Women Fund Tanzania
97. Women In Global Security
98. Women on Web
99. Women Peace Network, Myanmar - Women's Alliance for Security Leadership
100. Women's Assembly of Peoples' Democratic Party
101. Women's Refugee Commission
102. Women's Rights Center
103. Women's Earth and Climate Action Network
104. Women's Global League for Peace and Freedom
105. Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights
106. Women's March Global
107. YouAct – European Youth Network on Sexual and Reproductive Rights
108. Young Leaders Entrepreneurs Tunisia - Women's Alliance for Security Leadership