

**Human Rights Council: 35th session**  
**Item 3: ID with Working Group on the Elimination of Discrimination**  
**against Women in Law and Practice**



Thank you Mr. President,

Action Canada makes this statement on behalf of the Sexual Rights Initiative.

We welcome the Working Groups' report on good and promising practices to eliminate discrimination against women in law and practice. We support their advancement of the 'living law' approach which places legal change in context and recognizes the immense work of women's rights advocates in creating the conditions that make legal reform possible. We encourage States to take heed of this approach during their reporting to the UPR and the Treaty Bodies and also UN agencies in their quests to document "best practices" on a range of topics, especially regarding women's rights.

In all countries, the law acts as both a shield and a sword in the fight for women's rights. In some cases, it embeds norms and standards that protect women from discrimination, while in others, it criminalizes and punishes them for exercising their rights to autonomy and self-determination. This is starkly demonstrated by the imprisonment of women who have illegal abortions, State sanctioned violence against women who have the audacity to speak out against fundamentalisms and impunity for family members that kill women because of their perceived sexual transgressions.

Women are often skeptical of the law as a site of positive change, and for good reason. The passage of laws are borne from and operationalized through patriarchal institutions that often do not serve the needs or realities of women's lives. However, we can not ignore the power of the law in our societies and so we work to change the institutions from root to branch to ensure that it works for us and not against us. We appreciate the Working Group's commitment to capturing this nuanced and sometimes paradoxical undertaking in its report.

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to commend the Working Group for its important contributions to the Council since its inception. Their reports, public statements, country visits and engagement with civil society have greatly enhanced the content and quality of debate on women's rights at the Council and beyond.

Thank you.