

Human Rights Council – 34th session
Item 3: Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders
Statement by Action Canada for Population and Development



Thank you Mr. President,

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

Human rights defenders play a crucial role within the human rights system. They shed light on violations, they document and bear witness to horrific acts, and they push States to live up to their obligations. Their ability to work safely and without reprisals is a key element of maintaining sustainable and peaceful societies.

The Special Rapporteur acknowledges in his latest report that attacks against human rights defenders are multiplying everywhere and that there are too many and, increasingly, multiple hurdles put in the way of those persons who strive to peacefully promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Within this scenario, we would like to underline the situation of those human rights defenders who work on protecting, promoting and advancing of human rights related to gender and sexuality.

They are frequently women, adolescents and young people, people seeking and providing abortions, and LGBTI persons, working on the ground and facing exclusion and intersecting forms of discrimination, who instead of being recognized as human rights defenders, are often perceived as dangerous challengers of accepted socio-cultural norms, traditions and stereotypes and therefore subjected to several attacks that include harassment, surveillance, kidnapping and illegal deprivation of liberty, torture and murder from different perpetrators that comprises state and non-state actors, religious fundamentalists, media, organized crime groups, among other actors.

Although examples of most horrendous crimes committed against human rights defenders in all regions of the world are widely documented and reported, crimes committed against human rights defenders working on gender and sexuality are often overlooked, accepted and have complicity and legitimization of political leaders and governments.

We strongly call upon the Human Rights Council, the United Nations and member states to publicly acknowledge the particular and significant role played by human rights defenders working on gender and sexuality issues in the consolidation and advancement of plural and inclusive societies as a first step to preventing or reducing the risks that they face and take urgent measures to prevent them and offer effective security measures

Thank you,