



Honourable Minister Chris Alexander
Citizenship and Immigration Canada
(camp Montreal)

NOVEMBER 25, 2014

Dear Minister Alexander,

This letter registers our deep concern and outrage at your recent announcement about changes to Canadian laws in response to so-called "Barbaric Cultural Practices", which reflects paternalism and problematic colonial patterns of white and privileged racialized elites assuming they can speak for women, in particular those of us who experience discrimination and exclusion. Your pronouncements about so-called "barbaric cultural practices" are totally irresponsible. They generate racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia. Already policies and priorities your government have put in place have generated an 'honour crimes and forced marriage industry' that feeds off ignorance and media manipulation. You need instead to listen to and strengthen groups on the ground, who are working for equality rights and empowerment of women. And we are not alone in our outrage. Canadians across the country are also appalled.

1. Your government's proposal is redolent of **DUPPLICITY & DOUBLE-STANDARDS**. Lives of women and equality rights have suffered sharply under your government's tenure in office. Canada only ranks 20th in the gender gap of the World Economic Forum. Your government's action, as well as its inaction that have jeopardized equality rights for women makes a long list, including bodily integrity, violence, pay equity and reproductive health, making women vulnerable to precariousness caused by cutbacks and a funding focus on for-profit initiatives. You have also reduced women's ability to access information and statistics that provide information on vital areas by cutting the long census; the logic being if we don't have the numbers we don't have a problem.
2. **CANADIAN WOMEN ARE NOT SAFE**. Progress on "ending violence against women in Canada is stalled by the absence of a coherent national policy" (CCPA).
3. Your government has been so contemptuous with respect to the large numbers of **MISSING & MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN**, and placed the onus on the victims. In 2008, the UN Committee for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women demanded Canada take immediate action to protect Aboriginal women's rights. In 2011, former Auditor General Sheila Fraser noted that federal inaction had failed Aboriginal women and their communities.
4. Your government has demonstrated absolute **CALLOUSNESS FOR THE SAFETY OF WOMEN WHO HAVE FLED VIOLENCE IN THEIR COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN** and sought safe haven in Canada. In September you deported Jamila Bibi, aged 63, in Canada since 2006 after escaping accusations of adultery. She was returned to Pakistan and is now in hiding because she fears death by stoning. You also deported Winifred Agimelen and her children back to Nigeria, to Boko Haram, where her daughters face genital mutilation. In Montreal, Khurshid Begum Awan who fled violence in Pakistan is living very precariously and facing the threat of deportation. In Ottawa there is young Canadian-born Deepan Budlakoti who has been stripped of Canadian citizenship – the only one he ever had -- and is being forced to live precariously in legal limbo – no SIN card, no healthcare, etc., which has led Amnesty International to comment that your government's actions runs counter to Canada's "international human rights obligations with respect to statelessness and leads to other related human rights violations."
5. We can go on. These double-standards raise serious questions about the motives of your government in tabling the proposed amendments to existing laws at this time. In fact they can be seen as a continuum aimed at **REDUCING IMMIGRATION**, and instead **USING TEMPORARY WORKER STATUS** to acquire a pliant, submissive, cheap workforce, as well as to **DISTRACT Canadian VOTERS FROM REAL ISSUES** of precariousness that your government's neoliberal policies have been creating and are exacerbating.
6. A **LAW & ORDER AGENDA** is a distraction, not a solution. We already have many laws in place, yet they do not prevent or decrease violence against women.

You need to heed the results of studies such as SALCO's and the experience of groups such as ours. Your proposed policies will not work. In fact they are counter-productive.

Sincerely,

Dolores Chew
President