

December 7, 2004

Dear Ms. Ievers;

We have read very carefully your second e-mail response, dated November 15, 2004. Correspondence that relates to our request for an explanation of the “horizontal policy mandate” of the Status of Women and what this policy means in reference to identifying specific actions the Status of Women has taken, since 1993, regarding ritual abuse-torture.

Advancing women’s human rights and eliminating violence against women and girls you clearly stated were two of three priority areas of the Status of Women. These are two of the very legitimate reasons we contacted the Status of Women on May 12, 2004. Not only is ritual abuse-torture a violation of women’s human rights and the human rights of the girl child (and boy child) ... indeed, it is a form of torture by non-state actors ... a fact known to the Status of Women for eleven years. So our inquiry as to whether specific actions have been taken by the Status of Women to eliminate ritual abuse-torture is appropriate and long overdue.

Responding, in point form, to your electronic correspondence we highlight the following:

Point # 1:

You draw attention to the financial commitments, the 2003-2004 meetings, and to other voluntary groups working in the area of family violence and Aboriginal women and girls. This is important work. But there is no mention that ritual abuse-torture is being addressed as a reality within this specific community. We have been informed via testimonials that ritual abuse-torture is a depth of violence that does occur within this population. **Would you please provide specific evidence that as best practice interventions ritual abuse-torture is being named with specific funding allocated to address the trans-Canadian human rights violation of ritual abuse-torture?**

Point # 2:

Your letter discusses the Federal-Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women 2002 document, *Assessing Violence Against Women: A Statistical Profile*, with the purpose of providing prevalence information, insights into the severity of the violence against women (girls?), and to give direction to emerging problems. It would be important evidence of a best practice intervention if the Status of Women had included ritual abuse-torture in these discussions and in this document. Proof that there has been follow-up to the 1993 document, *Changing the Landscape: Ending Violence ~ Achieving Equality*, which was commissioned by the then Honourable Mary Collins, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women. This document identified ritual abuse-torture as occurring in every region of Canada (pages 45-47), ample testimonial evidence of horrific human rights violations and torture by non-state actors. **A best practice intervention would include naming and discussing ritual abuse-torture in the 2002 document so would you please forward to us any pages that outline the inclusion of ritual abuse-torture in this document.**

Point # 3:

You mentioned that individual women or groups of women can bring complaints to the committee that addresses the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. We will pursue this however, we asked for help on how to do this in our May 12, 2004 letter so we are again asking for your help. **Would you please provide us with necessary information: Who do we contact? What is the process? How can the Status of Women provide support to help us and the persons who submitted their signed statement, have ritual abuse-torture placed before this committee?**

We also realize that Canada was one of the first signatories to the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Ritual abuse-torture is a human rights violation of many Articles of this Convention, but more specifically of Articles 19, 34, 35, 37 dealing with abuse, torture, pornography, exploitation, and human trafficking of the child. Since one of the priorities of the Status of Women is eliminating violence against the girl child **we are asking if the Status of Women has placed ritual abuse-torture on the agenda of the committee attached to this Convention. If so, would you please provide information on the best practices of the Status of Women and how the Status is addressing ritual abuse-torture of the child at this level? If this intervention has not occurred, we ask that you help us connect with this committee. Who do we contact? What is the process? And, how can the Status of Women be of support to ensure this intervention happens?**

Trafficking is organized crime and the traffickers within ritual abuse-torture families and like-minded groups are non-state actors who also engage in torture. The traffickers are mothers, fathers, inter-generational family members and non-kin care-providers, for example. The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in November 2000, addresses human trafficking. **Has the Status of Women named the reality of ritual abuse-torturers as traffickers on this committee's agenda? If so, we ask that you provide information of this best practice intervention. If not, we ask that you help us with the process of getting ritual abuse-torture on the agenda. Who do we contact? What is the process? And, how can the Status of Women be of support to ensure this intervention happens?**

The United Nations Committee Against Torture has considered specific forms of torture, including human trafficking of women, as a gender-sensitive interpretation of torture as is defined in Article 1: "any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental is intentionally inflicted on a person ...". The human trafficking that occurs within the context of ritual abuse-torture families and like-minded groups fits this consideration. **Has the Status of Women been successful in placing the reality of ritual abuse-torture on this committee's agenda? If not, who do we contact? We ask for the support of the Status of Women to help us make contact with this Committee.**

Point # 4:

You stated that you are confident that the Department of Justice will give every consideration to our concerns, and thus, we assume you mean to the concerns of the persons so victimized who submitted and attached their signed statements of surviving the human rights atrocities of ritual abuse-torture, to our letter. Evidence does not bear out this belief—eleven years have gone by since the release of the 1993 document, *Changing the Landscape: Ending Violence ~ Achieving Equality*, and there are no indications that the Department of Justice has addressed the national panel's statement that Canadian survivors—nor, we add, present-day victims—have equal benefit and protection under Canadian law. The national panel goes on to state that with continued non-recognition for the crime of ritual abuse-torture that has been and continues to be endured, it is impossible to suggest the notion of a just or equitable society for persons who have been, who are, and who will be ritually abused-tortured. **As writers of this report we ask the Status of Women, as a best practice intervention, write to the Department of Justice advocating that action be taken to right these injustices identified in 1993 and the need to address the human rights violations and the torture by non-state actors that perpetrators of ritual abuse-torture inflict. We would appreciate a copy of this intervention.**

Conclusion:

Trust is built on evidence—behaviours and actions. In this case, trust would have to be built on factual evidence that the reality of the human rights violations and torture exposed in 1993—that ritual abuse-torture was reported to occur in every region of Canada—has not been shelved, ignored, dismissed, discarded, treated with cynicism, or devalued. Tragically, to date, Ms. Ievers, there is no such evidence to support that we ought to trust in or trust to the system. Rather, the evidence suggests that the Canadian governmental systems have turned their backs on the horrific crime of ritual abuse-torture in spite of their legal and human rights commitments—nationally and internationally—to Canadian women and the girl child. If we are proven wrong we will apologize ... until then wisdom dictates we have to respect the evidence thus the need for this letter accompanied by signed statements indicating that persons so victimized continue to have the crime of ritual abuse-torture unrecognized and suffer the lack of equal benefits and protection under Canadian law.

So, we will await your response as to the actions and best practices the Status of Women has taken or will provide in order to support the fundamental human rights of women and the girl child (and the boy child) who have endured the chronic life-threatening atrocities of ritual abuse-torture victimization.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Sarson & Linda MacDonald
PERSONS AGAINST RITUAL ABUSE-TORTURE
www.ritualabusetorture.org