

THOSE WHO TAKE US AWAY
Abusive Policing and Failures in Protection of
Indigenous Women and Girls in Northern British
Columbia, Canada

February 14, 2013

FYI - We received the below note from Manitoba, Communist Party of Canada. The link for the Human Rights Report as well as other related material follows.

If you're not on the streets today, take the time to pass this posting along. NiaWeh/Miigwech Kittoh

PS Interesting how the RCMP is falling all over themselves to deny, deny, deny while at the same time the Vatican is denying that the Pope's resignation had anything to do with dirty sex scandals. How far and wide the corruption!!!

It's time for full disclosure so that our Relatives may Rest in Peace.

K.

http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/canada0213webwcove_r.pdf

Dear Friends, Sisters and Brothers,

On this day of action for murdered and missing Aboriginal women in Canada, we are circulating yesterday's report from Human Rights Watch on the issue. It focuses on B.C., but the brutal racist and sexist realities are no different in this part of Canada, reported and unreported.

This is a systemic problem, connected to the oppression of both women and Aboriginal nations in Canada by the dominant, English-speaking nation and Quebec, a nation which itself is in an unequal union with the nonAboriginal "rest of Canada." Like war, the inequality of nations is an inherent part of capitalism in its late stage of development.

Solving the problem will require fundamental social change, curbing and ultimately ending the immense power of the corporate elite who benefit from all forms of discrimination and inequality, dividing working people and creating pools of super-exploited labour that drag all wages down.

In serious denial, the largest oppressor nation (or its political, corporate class) doesn't have a name for itself, because it refuses to recognize the genocidal crimes it continues to commit. It calls itself "Canada," claiming we have a "multi-cultural" society with no other real nations, except Quebec which Harper recognized because it is an equal opportunity oppressor of Aboriginal nations. Je me souviens Oka.

Human Rights Watch is playing a useful role by helping expose the crude police state Aboriginal peoples are resisting in Canada, although I disagree with the role it has played in other parts of the world.* The Aboriginal rights struggle requires the full solidarity of Labour and other popular movements. May Aboriginal nations win full rights and equality, and soon.

For a Commonwealth of Toil where the nightmare of the present fades away,
The meek are getting impatient,
Darrell Rankin
Manitoba office, Communist Party of Canada

*About HRW's role elsewhere, see for example
<http://www.mathaba.net/news/?x=628866> or
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2010/dec/31/human-rights-imperialism-james-hoge>

PS I recommend Eagle Watch as a consistent source of anti-colonial and anti-imperialist news in Canada, my source this morning:

Full report

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2013/02/13/those-who-take-us-away>
BBC report - RCMP 'discriminates against and abuses' First Nations women <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-21447735>

Before getting to the HRW news release, here are related reports with thanks to Eagle Watch:

1. Harper brushes off calls for inquiry into violence against Aboriginal women, Feb. 13, 2013 (Published widely today across Canada)

<http://o.canada.com/2013/02/13/harper-brushes-off-calls-for-inquiry-into-violence-against-aboriginal-women/>

2. Documents show Attawapiskat gets 0.5% share of annual diamond revenues, CBC News, Feb. 13, 2013

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/story/2013/02/13/tby-debeers-attawapiskat-diamond-deal.html>

* * * * * HRW news release

Canada: Abusive Policing, Neglect Along 'Highway of Tears'
Set Up National Inquiry Into Murders, Disappearances of
Indigenous Women, Girls

February 13, 2013

<http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/02/13/canada-abusive-policing-neglect-along-highway-tears>

(Ottawa) - The Royal Canadian Mounted Police in northern British Columbia has failed to protect indigenous women and girls from violence, Human Rights Watch said in a report released today.

Women and girls Human Rights Watch interviewed also described abusive treatment by police officers, including excessive use of force, and physical and sexual assault.

The 89-page report, "Those Who Take Us Away: Abusive Policing and Failures in Protection of Indigenous Women and Girls in Northern British Columbia, Canada," documents both ongoing police failures to protect indigenous women and girls in the north from violence and violent behavior by police officers against women and girls. Police failures and abuses add to longstanding tensions between the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and indigenous communities in the region, Human Rights Watch said. The Canadian government should establish a national commission of inquiry into the murders and disappearances of indigenous women and girls, including the impact of police mistreatment on their vulnerability to violence in communities along Highway 16, which has come to be called northern British Columbia's "Highway of Tears."

"The threat of domestic and random violence on one side, and mistreatment by RCMP officers on the other, leaves indigenous women in a constant state of insecurity," said Meghan Rhoad, women's rights researcher at Human Rights Watch. "Where can they turn for help when the police are known to be unresponsive and, in some cases, abusive."

Human Rights Watch conducted research along Highway 97 and along the 724-kilometer stretch of Highway 16 that has become infamous for the dozens of women and girls who have been reported missing or were found dead in its vicinity since the late 1960s. In July and August 2012, Human Rights Watch researchers interviewed 50 indigenous women and girls, and conducted an additional 37 interviews with families of murdered and missing women, indigenous leaders, community service providers, and others across 10 communities.

Indigenous women and girls told Human Rights Watch that the RCMP has failed to protect them. They also described instances of abusive policing, including excessive use of force against girls, strip searches of women by male officers, and physical and sexual abuse. One woman said that in July, four police officers took her to a remote location, raped her, and threatened to kill her if she told anyone.

Women who call the police for help have been blamed for the abuse, shamed over alcohol or substance use, and have found themselves at risk of arrest for actions taken in self-defense, women and community service providers told Human Rights Watch.

"I will never forget that day," said "Lena G.," whose 15-year-old daughter's arm was broken by a police officer after the mother called the police for help during an argument between her daughter and her daughter's abusive boyfriend. "It's the worst thing I ever did. I wish I didn't call."

Despite policies requiring active investigation of all reports of missing persons, some family members and service providers who made calls to police to report missing women or girls said the police failed to investigate the disappearances promptly.

Women and girls have limited recourse when they experience police abuse or when police fail to provide adequate protection, Human Rights Watch said. They can lodge a complaint against the police with the Commission for Public Complaints. But the process is time consuming and the investigation of the complaint is likely to fall to the RCMP itself or to another police force.

Human Rights Watch researchers were struck by the fear expressed by women they interviewed. The women's reactions were comparable to those Human Rights Watch has found in post-conflict or post-transition countries, where security forces have played an integral role in government abuses and enforcement of authoritarian policies.

In September 2012, Human Rights Watch wrote to the RCMP to advise the national headquarters and the "E" Division in British Columbia of the results of the research and seek information about questions raised by the research. The RCMP responded in November. Human Rights Watch did not include details of specific incidents of abuse in the September 2012 letter because of victims' fears of retaliation if the officers they accused were able to identify them.

British Columbia's legislature recently established the Independent Investigations Office (IIO) to provide independent civilian "criminal investigations regarding police-related incidents involving death or serious harm." The law's definition of "serious harm" would exclude most cases of police rape and other forms of sexual assault, however, sending a strong message that assaults on women and girls are not important, Human Rights Watch said.

"The lack of a reliable, independent mechanism to investigate allegations of police misconduct is unfair to everyone involved," Rhoad said. "It is unfair to the officers who serve honorably. It is unfair to the northern communities that deserve to have confidence in their police forces. And it is especially unfair to

the indigenous women and girls, whose safety is at stake.”

United Nations human rights bodies have criticized Canada for the inadequate government response to violence against indigenous women and girls. The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women announced in December 2011 that it was opening an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women in Canada. In 2008, the committee called on the government “to examine the reasons for the failure to investigate the cases of missing and murdered aboriginal women and to take the necessary steps to remedy the deficiencies in the system.”

The government of Canada has taken some steps to address the murders and disappearances, Human Rights Watch said, but the persistence of the violence indicates a need for a national public commission of inquiry.

“The high rate of violence against indigenous women and girls has caused widespread alarm for many years,” Rhoad said. “The eyes of the world are on Canada to see how many more victims it takes before the government addresses this issue in a comprehensive and coordinated way.”

Additional recommendations

- The Canadian government should develop and put into operation a national action plan in cooperation with indigenous communities to address the violence against indigenous women and girls, with attention to the current and historical discrimination and the economic and social inequalities that increase their vulnerability to violence, as well as the need for accountability for government bodies charged with preventing and responding to violence;

- The British Columbia provincial government should expand the mandate of the Independent Investigations Office (IIO) to include authority to investigate allegations of sexual assault by police;

- The RCMP, in cooperation with indigenous communities, should expand training and monitoring of training for police officers to counter racism and sexism in the treatment of indigenous women and girls in custody and to improve police response to violence against women and girls in indigenous communities; and

- The RCMP should eliminate searches and monitoring of women and girls by male police officers in all but extraordinary circumstances and require documentation and review of any such searches by supervisors and commanders. It should prohibit cross-gender strip-searches under all circumstances.

Statements about police abuse

"I feel so dirty...They threatened that if I told anybody they would take me out to the mountains and kill me, and make it look like an accident." - Gabriella P. (pseudonym), who told Human Rights Watch that in July 2012 four police officers took her to a remote location and raped her. She said that police officers had raped her in similar circumstances on previous occasions.

"'Here's your choice, you either get charged with assaulting an officer or you take the beating,' [said one of the officers.] Stupid me I said, 'I'll take the beating.' She grabbed me, slammed me up on the wall and I hit my head. Then she slammed me on the ground. A male cop drove his knee into my back while she stripped earrings out of my ears and elastics out of my hair. 'Have you had enough?' 'Yes, I've had enough. I'm sorry.' " - Anna T. (pseudonym) who spat on a police officer when she was arrested.

"I had a woman about two years ago who decided to report [a sexual assault] to the RCMP - very rare. I have worked with many women sexually assaulted and only a handful go forward with charges. She was made to feel that she was to blame...You have a system of authority that puts the blame on the victim." - Community service provider in northern British Columbia