

**U.N. HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL  
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**SUBMISSION FROM RIGHTONCANADA**

**RightOnCanada** is an internet based campaign that promotes global solidarity and citizen activism and works to put human rights back on Canada's agenda.

**1) CANADA IS GOING BACKWARD ON HUMAN RIGHTS**

Canada has made a legal and moral commitment to progressively implement rights contained in U.N. Conventions ratified by Canada that address economic, social and cultural rights; civil and political rights; the rights of children; the rights of women, the rights of indigenous peoples, as well as other rights.

Over the past two decades, in spite of having repeated, large budgetary surpluses, the Canadian government has ignored its human rights commitments and, far from making progress, violations of human rights have grown worse.

Homelessness, hunger, child poverty, inequality of women, suicide by aboriginal youngsters have continued and often increased. The government has not even put these issues on its political agenda as priority issues it intends to address.

**2) CLOSED, UNDEMOCRATIC PROCESS**

The government has reneged on Canada's obligations under international human rights law. For example, with regard to Canadian citizens tried in the U.S., and particularly with regard to the Canadian child soldier, Omar Khadr, held in Guantanamo Bay, the government has abandoned Canada's longstanding commitment to oppose the death penalty, to oppose torture, to recognize the special plight of child soldiers and to uphold the right to a fair trial.

These new policies that violate Canada's international human rights obligations were adopted by the government behind closed doors with no transparent, participatory process.

**3) DOUBLE STANDARD**

Human rights apply to all.

In today's globalized world, people's human rights can be violated by extra-territorial governments.

It is important, therefore, to take note when the Canadian government prevents people in other countries from accessing rights under a U.N. Convention that are rights taken for granted in Canada.

In situations where people are disempowered and vulnerable, it is especially important to respect human rights. A blatant example of Canada using a double standard and treating people in the developing world as deserving lesser rights is the position the Canadian government has taken with regard to the *U.N. Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade*.

Increasingly, hazardous chemicals and pesticides are exported to developing countries where resources and infrastructure to handle them safely are lacking. The Rotterdam Convention

requires exporting countries to at least obtain Prior Informed Consent before exporting specific hazardous chemicals and pesticides.

The right to be informed about hazardous chemicals and pesticides is a normal, recognized right in Canada.

Canada, however, refuses to allow developing countries to have this right with regard to Canada's export of chrysotile asbestos, 95% of which goes to developing countries, even though the Rotterdam Convention's expert scientific body has called for this.

Canada's refusal to accept the recommendation of the expert body has put the whole Convention in grave jeopardy and has denied people in developing countries their right to prior informed consent.

#### **4) TRIVIALIZING CANADA'S HUMAN RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS**

It is easy to pay lip service to human rights and it means very little. A country that takes its human rights obligations seriously sets up an open, effective process to monitor, to implement and to report on how much progress it is, or is not making, in achieving human rights.

The Canadian government has set up no such process with regard to its human rights performance. There are no goals; no open, participatory process involving citizens and Parliament; no monitoring; no follow-up to recommendations made to Canada by U.N. human rights bodies; no effective reporting mechanism.

The government sends a clear message that it regards its most serious human rights obligations under U.N. Conventions as being of trivial importance.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

**We ask the Human Rights Council to recommend that the Canadian government:**

- Set up a significant, transparent, participatory mechanism for monitoring, implementing and reporting on its progress in achieving its human rights obligations under national and international law.**
- Specifically incorporate Canada's international human rights obligations into Canadian law and policies.**