

----- Original Message ----- From: "Florence Ievers" <Florence.Ievers@swc-cfc.gc.ca>  
To: <flight@ns.sympatico.ca>  
Sent: Monday, November 15, 2004 10:57 AM  
Subject: Re: Ritual Abuse-Torture as a Human Rights Violation

Dear Ms. Sarson and Ms. MacDonald:

Thank you for your electronic message of September 15, 2004, regarding Status of Women Canada's horizontal policy mandate and the issue of ritual abuse-torture.

To begin, Status of Women Canada's horizontal policy mandate means that the agency does not have direct policy authority over other government departments and agencies but works in partnership with them on issues related to gender equality. As I stated in my previous message, responsibility for matters of criminal law, such as ritual abuse-torture, rests with the Department of Justice. I am confident that Justice officials will give every consideration to the concerns you have raised.

Status of Women Canada focuses its efforts in three priority areas: improving women's economic autonomy, advancing women's human rights and eliminating violence against women and girls. These priorities are clearly linked to this government's policy agenda, as laid out in the recent Speech from the Throne.

With respect to violence against women, you may be interested to know that in 2003, Status of Women Canada committed its Family Violence Initiative allocation of \$1 million over four years to supporting initiatives to address the complex web of issues related to violence against Aboriginal women. As well, in 2003-04, our Women's Program allocated almost \$4 million to a number of voluntary organizations across Canada working to identify and address the roots of violence against women and girls.

In December 2002, Federal-Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women released a document entitled *Assessing Violence Against Women: A Statistical Profile*. The purpose of the statistical profile is to provide information about the prevalence and severity of violence against women and to help identify directions for action on emerging problems, such as the disproportionately high rates of violence against young women and the increasing demand on services for abused women.

At their meetings in 2003 and 2004, Federal-Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women committed to examine and to take joint as well as individual action to improve the situation of Aboriginal women both on and off reserve, particularly in the area of violence.

Canada is firm in its international commitments to advance women's human rights and end violence against women. In October 2002, Canada acceded to the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The Optional Protocol allows individual women or groups of women to bring complaints to the Committee on the Elimination of

Discrimination Against Women and enables the Committee to investigate grave or systematic violations of women's rights in the Convention.

I hope the information I have provided is useful and thank you, again, for taking the time to write.

Yours sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY

Florence Ievers

Co-ordinator