



## **Combating Violence Against Indigenous Women**

A Joint Oral Statement Offered at the 29th Session of the UN Human Rights Council  
by the Indian Law Resource Center, National Congress of American Indians,  
and Native American Rights Fund  
Item 3 – Clustered ID with Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women (June 16, 2015)

The Indian Law Resource Center, National Congress of American Indians, and Native American Rights Fund offer this joint statement on violence against indigenous women and girls.

As this Council has recognized, indigenous women worldwide often suffer multiple forms of discrimination and disproportionate violence and murder not only because of their gender, but also because they are indigenous and members of indigenous peoples and communities.<sup>1</sup>

Despite affirmative steps by the United States to improve its laws, American Indian and Alaska Native women are still 2.5 times more likely to be assaulted than other women; one in three will be raped and three in five will be physically assaulted. Alaska Native women continue to suffer the highest rate of forcible sexual assault in America with “reported rates of domestic violence up to 10 times higher than in the rest of the United States.”<sup>2</sup> The situation can be even more dire for indigenous women elsewhere in the world.

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples affirms the rights and needs of indigenous women and children, calling on States to ensure they enjoy full protections and guarantees against all forms of violence and discrimination.<sup>3</sup> Empowering indigenous peoples, who often may be in the best position to combat this violence, and ensuring meaningful access to justice, are crucial.

At the 26th session of this Council, the United States delivered a joint statement by 35 countries expressing deep concern and calling for greater attention on addressing violence against indigenous women and girls, particularly at the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.

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<sup>1</sup> HRC Resolution 26/15. United Nations Economic and Social Council, Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, *Study on the extent of violence against indigenous women and girls in terms of article 22(2) of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, E/C.19/2013/9 (Feb. 12, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> *A Roadmap for Making Native America Safer, A Report to the President and Congress of the United States*, Chapter 2, Reforming Justice for Alaska Natives, p. 41 (November 2013).

<sup>3</sup> UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Article 22.

The World Conference outcome document<sup>4</sup> contains very important decisions for focusing UN attention on violence against indigenous women, and for enhancing the participation of indigenous peoples' governments within meetings of relevant UN bodies on issues such as violence against indigenous women.<sup>5</sup>

States committed to support the “empowerment of indigenous women” and “to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination,” particularly against indigenous women and children. States asked the UN to consider an implementing body for the Declaration,<sup>6</sup> which we recommend should pay particular attention to the rights of indigenous women and children.

States also invited this Council, in consultation with the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and others, to consider examining the causes and consequences of this violence.<sup>7</sup> To this end, we urge this Council to decide:

- a. To hold a panel on this issue during its annual discussion on women's rights; and
- b. To request a report on this issue from the Secretary- General that includes recommendations to enhance the mandates of its existing special procedures to request regular joint reports on this issue.

We call upon countries to support these modest, but life-saving recommendations to combat violence against indigenous women and girls.

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<sup>4</sup> UN General Assembly Resolution, A/RES/69/2.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* Para. 33.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* Para. 28.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.* Para. 19.