

Canada: Include safe abortion in maternal health !

Friday 25 June 2010, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 22 June 2010).

Press Conference NAF (National Abortion Federation, Action Canada for Population development and the Ad-Hoc Coalition for Women's Equality and Human Rights held a press Conference on June 22, 2010 , and the following letter was subsequently delivered to the Prime Minister's office.

June 22, 2010

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper

Prime Minister of Canada

Office of the Prime Minister, 80 Wellington Street, Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2, Canada

Dear Prime Minister Harper:

Earlier this year, you announced that maternal health will be a development priority at the G8 Summit in June. However, since this announcement, members of your cabinet have publicly stated that the government's maternal health strategy will not address unsafe abortions in developing countries or support access to family planning and contraceptives. While we commend your commitment to "champion a major initiative to improve the health of women and children in the world's poorest regions," [\[1\]](#) we know that in order to do so, the initiative must address the comprehensive maternal and reproductive health care needs of women, including access to safe abortion care.

The scientific evidence is overwhelming—access to safe, legal abortion care preserves women's health and saves women's lives. Unsafe abortion remains one of the leading causes of maternal mortality in developing nations. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), nearly 70,000 women worldwide die from unsafe abortions annually and millions more are injured, many permanently. [\[2\]](#)

International health, human rights, and development institutions, including Amnesty International and UN Agencies, consistently link contraception and the state of maternal health in the developing world. Recent research by the Guttmacher Institute and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) also found that seventy percent of maternal deaths would be averted and newborn deaths cut nearly in half, if existing unmet family planning and maternal and newborn health needs were met. [\[3\]](#)

At last year's G8 Summit in Italy, the G8 heads of government agreed that maternal and child health

was one of the world's most pressing global health problems. They committed to "accelerat[ing] progress...on maternal health, including through sexual and reproductive health care and services and voluntary family planning."⁴ It is imperative that the work done in Canada build on—not backtrack from—previous commitments. Sexual and reproductive health and rights, especially access to family planning, including contraception and safe abortion care, must be a central component of the initiative.

4 Paragraph 122 of the conclusions from the 2009 G8 reads: "We promote a comprehensive and integrated approach to the achievement of the health-related MDGs, also maximizing synergies between global health initiatives and health systems. We will accelerate progress on combating child mortality, including through intensifying support for immunization and micronutrient supplementation, and on maternal health, including through sexual and reproductive health care and services and voluntary family planning. We warmly support building a global consensus on maternal, newborn and child health as a way to accelerate progress on the Millennium Development Goals for both maternal and child health, through

(i) political and community leadership and engagement;

(ii) a quality package of evidence-based interventions through effective health systems;

(iii) the removal of barriers to access for all women and children, free at the point of use where countries chose to provide it;

(iv) skilled health workers; (v) accountability for results. We encourage the work of the WHO, WB, UNICEF and UNFPA are doing to renew international efforts on maternal and child health. We will implement further efforts towards universal access to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010, with particular focus on prevention and integration of services for HIV/TB...." See: http://www.g8italia2009.it/static/G8_Allegato/G8_Declaration_08_07_09_final,0.pdf

The G8 Summit comes at a critical time. In addition to the G8 and G20 meetings in Canada, world leaders will gather at the United Nations in September 2010, to take stock of progress on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) including MDG5 to reduce maternal mortality by three quarters and establish universal access to reproductive health care by 2015.⁵ This is the Goal toward which the least progress has been made by governments. The G8 maternal and child health initiative must be situated within the broader strategy toward achievement of the eight MDGs by 2015.

This is a significant opportunity to champion the health of some of the world's poorest women.

We ask that you honour Canada's long-standing tradition of recognizing women's reproductive rights and urge you to include access to contraception and abortion care in your initiative to improve maternal health care.

Sincerely,

National Abortion Federation Canada; Canada

Action Canada for Population and Development (ACPD); Canada

Ad Hoc Coalition for Women's Equality and Human Rights; Canada

Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA); Canada

Fédération du Québec pour le planning des naissances (FQPN); Canada

Abortion Law Reform Association of New Zealand; New Zealand

Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada; Canada

Abortion-Information (formerly USPDA); Switzerland

Advocates for Youth; United States

Alliance for Choice; Northern Ireland

American Association of University Women; United States

An-Institut Sexualpädagogik und Familienplanung; Germany

Asian Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women – Malaysia; International

Auckland Medical Aid Trust; New Zealand

British Pregnancy Advisory Services; United Kingdom

Canadian Federation for Sexual Health; Canada

Canadians for Choice; Canada

Catholics for Choice Canada; Canada

Catholics for Choice; United States

Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir; Mexico

Center for Reproductive Rights; United States

Centre d'IVG Hôpital Delafontaine; France

Concentric Media; United States

Concept Foundation; International

Concept Foundation; Vietnam

Despenalización; Argentina

Doctors for a Woman's Choice on Abortion; United Kingdom

Doctors for Choice; Ireland

Earth Life Africa; South Africa

East European Alliance for Reproductive Choice; Russia

Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights; Egypt

Equidad de Género, Ciudadanía, Trabajo y Familia; Mexico

European Association of Free Thought; International

European Humanist Federation; International

European Pro-Choice Network; International

5 http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/MDG_Report_2009_ENG.pdf Executive Committee of the European Society of Contraception and Reproductive Health; International

Fédération des Centres de Planning Familial; Brussels

Federation for Women and Family Planning; Poland

Federation of Medical Women; Canada

FIAPAC; International

Foro de Mujeres y Políticas de Población; Mexico

Global Doctors for Choice; United States

Grupo de Información en Reproducción Elegida; Mexico

Gynuity Health Projects; United States

Hand Off Cain; Italy

Ibis Reproductive Health; South Africa

International Consortium for Medical Abortion; International

Ipas; International

Ipas; Mexico

Irish Family Planning Association; Ireland

Japan Forum for Biodiversity; Japan

Kvinnefronten; Norway

La Red Nacional Católica de Jóvenes por el Derecho a Decidir; Mexico

Luca Coscioni Association for Freedom of Research; Italy

LUNA - Federation of Dutch Speaking Abortion Clinics in Belgium; Belgium

Macedonian Network of Women Organizations; Macedonia

Manitoba Coalition for Reproductive Choice; Canada

Marie Stopes International; United Kingdom

Medical Students for Choice; Canada

Mix-Cité Rennes Mouvement mixte pour l'égalité entre les sexes; France

Moscow State Medico-Stomatological University; Russia

National Abortion Federation; United States

National Asian Pacific Women's Forum; United States

National Association of Women and the Law; Canada

National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association; United States

National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health; United States

National Network of Abortion Funds; United States

National Partnership for Women and Families; United States

National Women's Council of Ireland; Ireland

National Women's Health Network; United States

National Women's Law Center; United States

Network Against Honour-Related Violence; Sweden

Netzwerk Frauengesundheit Berlin; Germany

No Peace Without Justice; Italy

Nonviolent Radical Party; Italy

Our Bodies Ourselves; United States

Pro Familia Landesverband Berlin e. V.; Germany

Progressive Unionist Party; Northern Ireland

Red ACTIVAS; Spain

Red Latinoamericana de Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir; Mexico

Red por los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos en México; Mexico

REGINA Foundation; Hungary

Reproductive Rights Alliance; South Africa

Russian Association of Population and Development; Russia

Russian University of International Friendship; Russia

Secularism Is A Women's Issue; France

SEMAK; Macedonia

Sex and Samfund; Denmark

Sextures; Australia

Shirkat Gah; Pakistan

Slovak Family Planning Association; Slovakia

Space Allies; Japan

Spanish Clinics Association of Interruption of Pregnancy; Spain

Suisse Association de Professionnels de L'avortment et de la Contraception; Switzerland

Swedish Association for Sexuality Education; Sweden

UK Reproductive Health Matters; United Kingdom

Woman-Child Health and Family Planning – Baskent University; Turkey Women and HIV/AIDS Gauge; South Africa

Women on the Web; The Netherlands

Women Worldwide Advancing Freedom and Equality; United Kingdom

Women's College Hospital; Canada

Women's Health Action Trust; New Zealand

Women's Health Foundation; Indonesia

Women's Health Research Unit – University of Cape Town; South Africa

Women's Legal Education and Action Fund; Canada

World Population Foundation; The Netherlands

YWCA Canada; Canada

Footnotes

[1] <http://www.thestar.com/opinion/article/755721—g8-agenda-focus-on-human-welfare>

[2] http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2007/9789241596121_eng.pdf

[3] <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/addingitup.pdf>