

MADRE

Uniting for Justice: Part Two

May 2024 Civil Society Consultation on the Gender Persecution Principles



Participants at the Winnipeg convening.

“We don’t deserve to be killed and disposed of in landfills,” said Hilda Anderson-Pyrz. Anderson-Pyrz was one of the participants in the second in a series of civil society consultations to develop recommendations for [Principles](#) on the Crime of Gender Persecution to submit to the International Criminal Court’s (ICC) Office of the Prosecutor. She was referencing [a recent case](#) in which Manitoba officials refused to search a dump for the remains of a missing Indigenous woman.

The convening was held in May at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. The Gender Persecution Principles are intended to build on the ICC prosecutor’s 2022 [policy](#) on investigating and prosecuting gender persecution charges, offering guidance to other international institutions, governments, and civil society on preventing and addressing gender persecution wherever they find it. The Canada convening followed the [kickoff event](#) in Bogotá, Colombia, held in April.

MADRE

Forty people participated in the meeting, including academic experts, community advocates, practicing lawyers, and health professionals with expertise in sexual and gender-based violence, Indigenous rights, Two-Spirit and LGBTQI+ rights, immigrant and refugee rights, intergroup conflict and reconciliation, health equity (including Black health equity), international humanitarian law, and sustainable development.

Canada has been facing a decades-long crisis of violence against Indigenous women and girls, which framed much of the May discussion. More than 1,100 Indigenous women and girls have been murdered or gone missing since 1980, according to [official statistics](#). A National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls issued a report in 2019 enumerating 231 Calls for Justice, but only two have been implemented so far.



Anderson-Pyrz, shown here, is a member of the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation in Manitoba and is currently Chair of the National Family and Survivors Circle Inc. in Canada. For the past 20 years, she has been a tireless advocate and leader to prevent and end gender- and race-based violence against Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit and LGBTQI+ people. Anderson-Pyrz stressed the importance of educating law enforcement on gender persecution in communities that are currently overpoliced and underprotected, and access to safe spaces accessible to victims of gender persecution who are located in remote and isolated places.

“Family members who have a loved one – a mother, sister, or daughter – who is missing feel that the police are not on their side,” Anderson-Pyrz said. “If they go to police, their voice is not respected. They are told, ‘She’s out drinking, she’ll come home after partying’. I should not have to accompany a family member to the police station to have

MADRE

their voice heard, but I do have to do that with them. We need to police the justice system.”

Anderson-Pyrz called for the voices of survivors and families of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls to be clearly reflected in the Gender Persecution Principles and transitional justice efforts.

Participants stressed that many countries have their own existing platforms and recommendations – like the Calls to Action from Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation and the Calls to Justice from its National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls – that should guide development of Gender Persecution Principles to avoid reinventing the wheel. Other recommendations from the group include:

- Support existing domestic, regional, and international policies and mechanisms focused on preventing and addressing gender persecution. Policies and mechanisms already in place should be leveraged, supported, and deepened.
- Undertake nuanced and community-engaged education to prevent and repair harms caused by gender persecution in all of its forms.
- Take steps to minimize the effect of bias in the investigation and prosecution of the crime of gender persecution, whether at the local, regional, or international level, and recognize that victimization impacts an entire community for generations.
- Recognize that many domestic legal systems cannot and do not adequately address gender-based violence or provide security to minority groups. These deficiencies mean that, if domestic police and justice systems are used to address gender persecution, the risk of retraumatizing survivors and their families is high.

The next convening will be held in South Africa on July 26. Canadian organizers plan to hold another event in September in Toronto, gathering Afghan, Iranian, and other human rights advocates with an interest in the Gender Persecution Principles.

[Here’s more information](#) on submitting your own recommendations for the Principles on the Crime of Gender Persecution for the International Criminal Court’s Office of the Prosecutor.