

November 26, 2010

Prime Minister Stephen Harper
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A2



Dear Prime Minister Harper,

Re: Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network is a charitable, not-for-profit organization that promotes the human rights of people living with and vulnerable to HIV/AIDS through research, legal and policy analysis, education, and community mobilization. It is one of the world's leading organizations in the field, with an extensive body of human rights-based research and analysis on a range of legal and policy issues related to HIV/AIDS.

We are writing you in advance of the second anniversary of the unanimous adoption by the General Assembly of the Optional Protocol to the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* on 10 December 2010 to urge you to sign and ratify or accede to this Protocol and fully implement it without delay.

The Protocol creates a mechanism through which individuals and groups, whose human rights (such as the rights to health, adequate housing, food, water, work, social security and education) have been violated, and who have not been able to achieve justice in their own countries, can present a case before a UN body and seek justice.

Human rights must be central to efforts to reduce poverty and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, as recognized by all UN Member States at the MDG Summit in September 2010. By ratifying the protocol, the Canadian government would show that it is willing to be held accountable for its human rights commitments.

When you become a party to the Protocol, we also urge you to make a declaration recognizing the competence of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to undertake inquiry and interstate procedures under this Protocol.

The Protocol is a much needed and concrete step to rectify the gaps in international protection for victims of violations of economic, social and cultural rights. By becoming a party to the Protocol, the Canadian government can demonstrate its commitment to protecting human rights and eradicating poverty at home and internationally. This will also send an important signal to other states that it is imperative to ensure access to remedies to victims of all forms of human rights violations.

We hope that you will act to strengthen the recognition and implementation of economic, social and cultural rights and access to justice for all victims, and would be pleased to provide further information and to meet to discuss this issue.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Elliott', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Richard Elliott
Executive Director