

**Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network**

**joined by**

**International Lesbian and Gay Association**

***Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of punishment***

and

***Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders***

Read by: Mauro Cabral

March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014

Mr. President

This statement is also made on behalf of several intersex NGOs from around the world.

We would like to congratulate the Special Rapporteur on Torture on his ongoing work this year, and thank him for the historical decision of including intersex issues in his report on abuses in health-care settings, presented last year at the 22<sup>nd</sup> session of the Human Rights Council.

Intersex people are those born with bodies that vary from both male and female standards, including our chromosomes, hormones, gonads and/or genitals.

In all countries of the world intersex children are subjected to surgical and hormonal procedures, without their consent and without any medical need, with the sole purpose of 'normalizing' the external appearance of their genitalia. These are the irreversible medical practices that the Special Rapporteur identified clearly as human rights violations.

As intersex adults, we face the consequences of those procedures, including genital insensitivity, sterilization, physical and mental trauma. For many of us, these medical abuses are a clear form of genital mutilation.

Intersex adults also face discrimination at different levels, including access to proper health care, to education, to sanitation, and to sports. The media contributes to the stigma we face, disseminating misinformation and to reproduce stigmatization against intersex people. Intersex people in confinement institutions – such as mental and penitentiary facilities – are constantly exposed to violence related to intersex status. Alarming information about increasing numbers of cases of selective abortion and infanticide grounded on intersexuality is coming from different countries.

We would like to call on States to follow the recommendation of the Special Rapporteur and put an end to human rights violations affecting intersex people, and to provide adequate redress. We also remind States of including intersex people in all decision-making processes affecting us, including consulting us on legislation and other measures concerning intersex issues. We would invite all present to a side event tomorrow, in room VIII at 10 am. This historic side event will be the first ever at the UN to bring specific attention to the human rights needs of intersex persons.

We also commend the Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders for her sustained attention during her mandate to the needs of those most marginalised, including defenders working on sexual orientation and gender identity issues.

As the Special Rapporteur has noted in her final report to the Council, a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders is undermined by laws that criminalise same-sex relations, or which prohibit their work to advance equality and respect on these grounds.

The Special Rapporteur's communications report highlights numerous violations of the rights of LGBTI defenders, including denials of freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, State refusal to register NGOs, police harassment, and violent attacks, as well as recent legislation in countries such as Uganda, Nigeria and Russia, which prohibits any advocacy of human rights issues relating to sexual orientation and gender identity, restricts the legitimate activities of a broad range of civil society actors, and exposes defenders to risk of violence and reprisals. Such legislation has been passed in wider cultures of State impunity, with increasing suppressions of fundamental human rights.

We commend the Special Rapporteur for her attention to these issues, and would ask what can be done to ensure that human rights defenders working on these issues are adequately protected."

Thank you.