Urgent Call to Action: Addressing Femicide and Gender-Based Violence in Canada

In the wake of recent tragic incidents of femicide in our communities, THANS member organizations raise alarm for the urgent need to address the systemic issues that perpetuate gender-based violence and endanger the lives of women. With an increase in the severity of violence, requests for services, and the increasing numbers of women being killed, we must acknowledge that the problem is at a critical stage and requires action. Femicide is preventable and the recommendations found in the Nova Scotia Mass Casualty Commission's Final Report, the National Inquiry into MMIWG2S, and in the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence provide solutions to address this growing problem.

Between 2018 and 2022, 850 women and girls have been the victims of femicide in Canada, as reported by the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability in 2022. This equates to a woman or girl being killed every 48 hours across the country. According to this same data, one of the most common cases of femicide involved intimate-partner violence, followed by familial femicide.

These disturbing statistics illustrate that home is not always safe for women and girls in Canada and that more must be done to eliminate gender-based violence. As stated by UN Women Executive Director Sima Bahous, it is important to remember that "behind every femicide statistic is the story of an individual woman or girl who has been failed. These deaths are preventable–the tools and the knowledge to do so already exist".

In most media reporting on femicides, the word "femicide" itself is hardly used. Using the term "femicide" is crucial as it acknowledges the specific gender-based nature of these killings, highlighting the targeted violence against women and emphasizing that these are not random incidents but part of a wider pattern.

We extend our deepest sympathy to the families and all those affected by the recent femicides in our province and across the country. Our organization has spent many decades educating, advocating, and calling for changes that will eradicate femicide. We will continue to support women who reach out for our services, to educate those in our communities to identify domestic abuse and intimate partner violence, and to challenge misogynic attitudes that normalize violence against women.

We strongly urge all stakeholders, including government agencies and policymakers, to follow through on the implementation of the recommendations found in the Nova Scotia Mass Casualty Commission's Final Report, the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence, and the National Inquiry into MMIWG2S. These include calls for increased operational funding for VAW organizations to address the epidemic of femicide our communities are facing, an external accountability mechanism for policing responses to intimate partner violence, and promoting and countering victim blaming and hyper-responsibilization of survivors, among others. It is time for collective action to ensure the safety and well-being of women and girls across Canada.

Those needing support should call/text the provincial toll-free line 1-855-225-0220, available 24/7 or a local organization. Further information is available on our website at thans.ca. If you are in an emergency situation, call 911.

THANS