



### **33rd session of the Human Rights Council**

September 20th

Oral Statement

Panel Discussion on Violence Against Indigenous Women & Girls

Thank you Mr. President

I make this statement on behalf of the Sexual Rights Initiative.

We welcome the panel's focus on structural forms of violence against indigenous women as a much needed and highly neglected topic for consideration by this Council.

In her 2015 report, the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples characterized violence against indigenous women as "a broad, multifaceted and complex spectrum of mutually reinforcing human rights abuses". This spectrum is influenced by patriarchal power structures, multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and marginalization, and historical and current violations of the right to self-determination and control of resources.

The legacy of colonialism, perpetuated by post-colonial power structures, patriarchy, gender norms and stereotypes and neo-liberal economic policies, denies indigenous women's agency, excludes indigenous women from development paradigms and increases vulnerability to violence and abuse. Violence in the form of forced sterilization, femicide, racism, cultural denigration, food insecurity, lack of culturally appropriate health, social and education services, lack of safe drinking water, higher maternal mortality rates, unbridled resource extraction, land appropriation, rape by State and non-State actors and over-incarceration, among other forms, are often invisible in national and international policy debates. This contributes to a culture of impunity for all forms of violence against indigenous women which must end if the international community is truly committed to human rights, the sustainable development goals and to leaving no one behind.

In responding to the complex interaction between individual and collective rights, between colonial pasts and current realities, between the obligation to provide protection from all forms of violence and the rights to autonomy and self-determination, and between the right to access to justice and recognition of self-governance, States must adopt an inclusive approach which can only be achieved by consulting with, listening to, responding and working with indigenous women.

Given the scale, breadth and deeply entrenched forms of violence against indigenous women in different contexts around the world, we would like to ask the panelists how States can begin to build trust with indigenous women in order to address these pressing human rights violations?

Thank you