

Renewed pro-abortion activism expected at the UN

Interim Staff

In late November, the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) released its annual report, *State of the World Population 2008. Reaching Common Ground: Culture, Gender and Human Rights*.

This document, published after the election win of Barack Obama, sets the tone for the new administration in the White House on the international stage. Many UN agencies have a longstanding history of pushing population control, but during the Bush administration's tenure, they were not able to push the anti-life, anti-family envelope as they once had. Under the Clinton administration, social radicals and feminists used international conferences on all manner of issues and topics to push for sex

education, birth control and abortion. For the past eight years, however, pro-life and other socially conservative observers of the UN found that the U.S. delegation had done an outstanding job of standing up for life and the family at the international level.

This year marks the 15-year review of the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development (1994). The following year will mark the 15-year review of the Fourth World Conference on Women, the infamous 1995 Beijing Women's conference where former first lady Hillary Clinton aggressively pushed abortion "rights." With Obama in the White House, pro-life and pro-family forces will have to redouble their efforts at these events and others. The latest UNFPA report is the first of a new era and clearly shows

that anti-life forces got a boost in confidence from Obama's victory.

The UNFPA says that some cultural practices are harmful to the human rights of women. According to the report, "Cultural sensitivity entails support for the many women - and some men - within the society who contest (religious) practice." Far from demonstrating respect for people who choose to live their faith, such a statement reinforces negative stereotypes about people of all religious backgrounds. It is an indirect attack on the traditional values that are at the core of many religious doctrines.

In addition, the document acknowledges that "human rights can be ingrained through 'cultural legitimacy'" - essentially summarizing the tactics used by radical feminists to normalize abortion,

contraception, divorce and radical sex education. "Sexual and reproductive rights" are not mentioned in the Universal Human Rights Declaration, which marked its 60th anniversary in December, but pro-abortion forces believe that by consistently interpreting UN documents and working at the local level to give cultural legitimacy to their demands, people will eventually perceive sexual and reproductive rights as always having been interpreted to include things such as contraception and abortion.

The UNFPA's definition of a "culturally sensitive approach" advocates relativism and is in direct opposition to the idea that some rights are universal and inherent to each human being. By establishing and working with groups in developing countries, the UNFPA is able to

manipulate cultural norms and make it appear that abortion is a generally and widely accepted practice, and it may even fabricate the number of illegal abortions to suggest greater demand for decriminalizing the practice.

Chapter 4 of the report is entirely dedicated to sexual and reproductive health. It addresses HIV/AIDS, obstetric fistula, female genital mutilation and family planning. The report states that "millions of women still do not have control over spacing or limiting pregnancies nor access to effective contraception. This is the result of ineffective health systems, but there are also social and cultural factors involved. In many cultures, patriarchal frameworks determine notions of masculinity and femininity, as well as the meanings of sexuality,

reproduction and rights." Reproductive rights have been interpreted here to include abortion and contraception.

The International Planned Parenthood Federation also published a document in November. The IPPF's statement on sexual rights is yet another example of what may be expected in the years to come. However, pro-life, pro-family forces are ready to fight back. A pro-life coalition at the UN made up of organizations from around the world, including Campaign Life Coalition and led by the UN-based Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute, has presented a petition with over 400,000 signatures, requesting that the UN stop its constant reinterpretation of the Universal Human Rights Declaration to include abortion.

'I had a duty to fight back'

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We didn't agree to any limits on what we could do with the recording, so I decided to upload the video to YouTube. I planned to tell a few friends about it and I thought the clips might get a few thousands views - I never imagined they would become the fifth-most watched video on the internet that weekend, with about 200,000 views in two days, if I recall. (They have since been seen close to 700,000 times.)

Canadians had never seen a journalist interrogated by the government before. Those things aren't supposed to happen here - we're not China or Iran. That's why the video clips were so shocking.

TI: David Warren has said that when it comes to human rights complaints, the process is the punishment. You "won" the case launched by Syed Soharwardy, but did you understand what Warren was saying about the process?

EL: More than 90 per cent of people targeted by Canada's 14 human rights commissions accept a plea bargain. It's understandable - the system is rigged against its victims. Unlike real courts, if you win, you are not entitled to your legal costs being paid. The human rights commissioners are not real judges and often not even real lawyers - they're radical activists who don't even pretend to be impartial. And at the Canadian Human Rights Commission, their censorship provision has a 100 per cent conviction rate over the past 31 years. No one has ever been acquitted. Even China and Iran let a few people go as a pretense to impartiality.

I was offered a plea bargain, too. If I paid several thousand dollars in cash to my radical Muslim antagonists, and gave them a page in *The Western Standard* to write whatever they wanted, I would

be let go. That would have saved me about \$90,000 in legal fees and hundreds of hours of stress and time. But it would have been extortion.

I note that Bishop Fred Henry agreed to a "compromise" when he was charged with "homophobia" by Alberta's HRC in 2005 - as part of his deal, he issued a "clarification" of his views on same-sex "marriage." But he had been quite clear beforehand - his "clarification" was done under duress of the government. I'm sure Bishop Henry regrets not fighting harder, because his capitulation, though modest, gave the HRCs enormous encouragement. If they could bulldoze the bishop of Calgary, surely they could bulldoze anyone.

TI: You began blogging about HRCs and your output has been impressive: thousands of words every month, digging up details, exposing the actions of the tribunals and commissions. Why didn't you celebrate your win and move on to other issues?

EL: If the goal was simply to save my own skin, I could have accepted the plea deal that was offered to me. But I was so appalled by the system - and every new fact that I learned, as I studied the subject - that I realized I had a duty to fight back. I am an unusually stubborn person, I am not conflict-averse and I have some political, legal and media skills and connections. In other words, I felt uniquely fit to fight back. Let me put it another way: if a neighbour or friend of mine had been charged, instead of me, I'm sure I would have constantly wished he would be tougher or louder or more stubborn or more active in fighting back. From that point of view, it was actually a stroke of good luck that I was targeted; I was a good fit for the fight. I won the three complaints against me. But just because the HRCs

are done with me, doesn't mean I'm done with them!

TI: What is the ultimate goal in this battle against the HRC industry and is it winnable?

EL: You're right to call it an industry: 14 HRCs, with a combined annual budget of \$200 million and 1,000 employees. It's a parallel court system, that leaves no aspect of Canadian life untouched. But unlike real courts, it's quite corrupt, one-sided and illiberal. The long-term goal must be to abolish the HRCs and leave legal matters to real courts. It's an achievable goal in the long term, but it requires what I call "denormalization" - for Canadians to be exposed to the appalling realities of the HRCs. The number one thing the HRCs have going for them is their beautiful name. We have to show Canadians that's an Orwellian name - they actually destroy our rights. We must publicly ridicule the excesses of the HRCs. And, given their ridiculousness, it's easy to do.

TI: What's next for Ezra Levant? I hear you have a book coming out?

EL: I've written a book on HRCs called *Shakedown*. McClelland & Stewart is publishing it in the new year and they are planning a very wide distribution of the book. I've won my three HRC complaints. But I have also been hit with more than 20 nuisance suits by the HRC industry - various HRC lawyers, activists and others have hit me with defamation suits and complaints to the law society (demanding I be disbarred for things like using the term "kangaroo court"! It's "lawfare" - they're trying to grind me down, since the regular processes didn't stop me.

Fortunately, the readers of my blog have helped me cover the \$175,000 in legal bills I've faced between the HRC complaints and these many other actions, which will probably continue for at least a year.

Levant personifies paradox

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A temporary setback. Come the new year, Ezra Levant will launch a new book about his adventures called *Shakedown: How Our Government is Undermining Democracy in the Name of Human Rights*. Not a few admirers think Levant should win the Order of Canada for his pains. Perhaps one day, he will.

Meanwhile, Levant continues to personify para-

dox: the outspoken Jewish defender of persecuted Christians; that embarrassingly "un-Canadian" fellow shouting about "liberty" in a nation that prefers "free" government entitlements to individual freedom and quiet mediocrity to brash success. In such a country, the notion of Ezra Levant receiving its highest civilian honour seems an unlikely prospect. Being named *The Interim's* Person of the Year will have to do for

now. It is an honour sincerely bestowed and well deserved.

Kathy Shaidle is co-author of *The Tyranny of Nice: How Canada Crushes Freedom in the Name of Tolerance* (and Why It Matters to Americans).



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