

Van: Human Rights Watch <news@hrw.org>
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Aan: Veerle Solia
Onderwerp: Canada's Parliament Seizes on Police Abuse Report

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Dear Veerle,

Where can British Columbia's indigenous women turn for help when the police are unresponsive, and, in some cases, abusive? This was the question [Meghan Rhoad](#) asked when she launched what Canadian media described as an "[explosive](#)" report in February.

The report details evidence that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police fail to protect indigenous women and girls from violence, and sometimes even compound the problem with their own abuses, including sexual assault and rape. Canada's media covered the report extensively, and members of parliament fired difficult questions at Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

The report was debated in Parliament the day after it was released. Opposition parties introduced a motion, which the government did not oppose, to establish a special parliamentary committee to investigate violence against indigenous women and girls. It is hoped that such a committee would be part of a wider process to hold abusive police officers and other perpetrators to account, and to enable indigenous women to trust that they can call the police for help.



Liesl Gerntholtz
Director Women's Rights Division



PHOTOS

About 400 women and girls in Afghanistan are imprisoned for “moral crimes.”

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Girls Jailed for ‘Moral Crimes’

It was winter when I interviewed Tahmina at a Kabul prison for girls in Afghanistan. Six to eight girls lived in each room, and although I preferred to interview each of them privately, the girls all wanted to stay together and hear what everyone had to say. So together, we sat on the carpeted floor and listened to Tahmina’s story.

Facing a forced marriage that she didn’t want, Tahmina told me, she ran away from home, trying to find the boy she liked. Instead, she encountered two men who kidnapped and raped her. Afterward, the two men took her to a neighborhood elder, who took her to the police station. She was arrested and found guilty of “moral crimes” – specifically, running away, and, because of the rape, *zina*, or sex outside of marriage.

Almost all girls in juvenile detention in Afghanistan have been arrested for moral crimes, while about half the women in Afghan prisons were arrested on these charges. These “crimes” usually involve flight from unlawful forced marriage or domestic violence. Some women and girls, like Tahmina, have been convicted of *zina* after being raped or forced

RESEARCHER



Heather Barr

Heather researches abuses in Afghanistan for Human Rights Watch. Previously, she worked in Afghanistan for the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and for the UN Development Program. She began her legal career at the Urban Justice Center in New York, and she attended Columbia Law School and the London School of Economics.

into prostitution.

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