



## December 10<sup>th</sup> “The International Human Right Day” Our Rights - Our Freedoms

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Together with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, these instruments set out the civil, political, cultural, economic, and social rights that are the birth right of every person.

On this, International Human Rights Day, we recognize the continued relevance of these covenants and the freedoms that underpin them. Too many people in Canada and abroad are not free from want, or fear and hate. They are not free to create security for themselves and their families and so many are free of hope.

We have to do more than recommit in words. It is easy to point our fingers south of the border where our neighbours are engaged in a presidential campaign rife with anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim rhetoric. It is harder to have to scrutinize ourselves. We need to look in our collective mirrors and ask ourselves hard questions about discrimination, about racism and about inequality in our own country. We need to ask questions about safety, about exclusion from social, economic and political institutions and decision-making and we need to examine the role of fear and hate.

Our newly elected federal government has finally responded to a decade long call for an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women, but why did it take so long? How can it be that over a thousand women are murdered or missing and we did nothing for so long? Why is there a backlash against refugees fleeing gross human rights abuses? Why are there disproportionate poverty rates amongst equity-seeking groups? As a country we must examine these questions, and so many others, so that we can have an honest conversation about dignity, equality and inclusion.

Under the previous government our country squandered its well-earned reputation for promoting and defending human rights. Unifor calls on our current government to renew Canada's leadership role. We also challenge every citizen to take some time to self-reflect, to engage in difficult conversations and work towards building a society where respect for human rights is not a 50 year aspiration, but is a reality.

[Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)