

**UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Eighth Session  
May 18-29, 2009**

**Global Indigenous Women's Caucus Statement**

**Agenda Item 3:**

**Follow Up on the Recommendations of the Permanent Forum**

**(b) Urban Indigenous Women and Migration**

The causes of migration and forced evictions of Indigenous Peoples are directly linked to the value and scarcity of natural resources on their lands. Most recently, migration is forced by an unstable and top-heavy fiscal market dealing in virtual commodities. The acquisition of indigenous lands is conducted, as it has been done historically, with extreme military force and by means of unconstitutional and unethical laws that deprive us of basic civil rights protection, in the name of national or dominant priorities. Indigenous Peoples are therefore forced out from their traditional lands with the specious justification of the needs of Climate Change mitigation or adaptation, economic growth or national security. These practices exempt the rights of Indigenous Peoples to development and self-determination.

The Permanent Forum must address to the appropriate UN bodies and agencies the suffering that displaced Indigenous Children, Women and Men experience when they we migrate from our territories and lands. Our ways of life change dramatically with damaging consequences to our cultures: the loss of our cultural identity and languages, and the traumatic, insidious assimilation into the cultures and ethics of dominant society.

Indigenous Women in the cities become cheap unrecognized labor, with low wages, no health benefits or any protection of fair labor laws. They must work in deplorable conditions in order to survive and feed their families. In growing numbers, Indigenous children, women and men are forced into the sex market and other kinds of servitude and slavery, without recourse. Indigenous women are the often the head of single parent households due to the abandonment by male earners in the family or the psychological or physical disablement of the men. Furthermore, indigenous women are disproportionately exposed to physical, psychological and cultural violence due to their ethnicity, gender, and poverty status.

In the cities, Indigenous Peoples are forced to change their ways of life and food diet that are causing several new sicknesses upon them, such as diabetes, heart disease, tuberculosis, respiratory ailments, drug/alcohol addictions, and other poverty-induced suffering.

Because of the lack of medical insurance or discriminatory practices by health providers, Indigenous Peoples do not get essential health care. Indigenous Women's health is further compromised by the unavailability of their own traditional healing systems when they are removed from their territories.

When Indigenous Women must cross borders to seek safety and for survival, their forced migration is criminalized and they must endure great suffering. The building of border walls is causing gross human rights violations against indigenous migrants, causing terror and insecurity for those Indigenous Peoples whose territories are in such borderlands. Furthermore, this last group is facing the loss of their cultures and traditional economic and social activities due to the construction of such walls. Mother Earth is also being severely harmed as animals and plants cannot naturally move in their environments.

Madame Chairperson,

*Affirming* that rights of indigenous women are protected by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,

*Acknowledging* that on a global scale millions of Indigenous Peoples have been forced to move to urban areas for their survival,

*Affirming* that Indigenous Peoples have the right to move freely within their traditional territories,

*Emphasizing* that urban indigenous women comprise half of all urban Indigenous Peoples globally,

*Concerned* that states' repression and daily societal discrimination against urban Indigenous People is a global problem,

*Further concerned* that due to militarized border enforcement policies and practices, thousands of indigenous women have died in the deserts, mountains, and seas that constitute the borders between states, such as the U.S.-Mexico borderlands and the borderlands that separate Africa from Europe,

*Worried* that state violence against indigenous migrants in the forms of raids and other police tactics, as well as militarization, have resulted in the deportation of thousands Indigenous women,

*Emphasizing* that although indigenous women face the brunt of state violence, such violence has an impact on entire indigenous communities, which often results in the separation of families and the degradation of indigenous cultures,

*Concerned* that the separation of indigenous children from their mothers often results in the forced assimilation and the degradation of indigenous cultures,

*Appalled* by the use of physical and psychological torture used against urban indigenous women in immigrant detention centers, state jails and prisons,

*Concerned* that past recommendations of the Permanent Forum on indigenous migration to states have not been addressed, as it is obvious by the aggravation of the problems faced by indigenous women,

We recommend,

1. That the Permanent Forum urge governments to implement Art. 10 of DRIP on the right to not be forcibly removed from their territories. We also urge the Permanent Forum to request UN bodies and agencies to create legal mechanisms for the right to not migrate.
2. That the Permanent Forum urge the ratification of Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families by those states who have not done that.
3. That the Permanent Forum urge states to decriminalize migration and instead link the right to mobility to the right to self-development.
4. The Permanent Forum to request the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights of Indigenous People to study the situation of indigenous women migrants in urban and rural environments, as well as those who are forced to cross borders as economic refugees.
5. The Permanent Forum to request that UN bodies and agencies develop programmes and projects to address the needs of indigenous women who migrate to urban environments, especially big cities where they face even greater problems.
6. The Permanent Forum to request governments to fund programs following a rights-based approach and the Convention of the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of their Families to assist indigenous women legally and to let them know of their rights.
7. That the Permanent Forum requests governments that undocumented indigenous women in their own and foreign countries must be assisted in several ways using Indigenous languages and cultural interpreters in all situations in which they have to deal with the state.
8. That the Permanent Forum urge UN agencies and bodies and government to organize national, regional and international meetings with the families who stay at the country of origin and those who are abroad to evaluate the migration consequences on their families and communities and find culturally-appropriate solutions for their social, economic, cultural, spiritual and political needs.
9. The Permanent Forum to recommend states to have a national migration policy and have international agreements to stop or alleviate the problems caused by

migration and to provide better life conditions for Indigenous Peoples towards getting our holistic well being.

10. The Permanent Forum to urge governments and Indigenous Peoples to address the concomitant loss of community citizenship and rights when Indigenous women are forced to migrate or are displaced for violent conflicts.
11. That the Permanent Forum urge states to protect the rights of indigenous women to lands and territories, and to inherit, in the context of migration.

Thank you.