

## PRESS RELEASE

### *Guns and Violence Against Women: A Dangerous Connection*

Montréal, Decembre 3, 2009. **Antennes de paix Montreal** 's working group on arms trafficking wishes to support all activities that protest violence against women, particularly violence which involves the use of arms. Tragically, our society continues to reflect a deep-seated rejection of women. This is expressed in many forms of injustice which persist despite years of work toward women's equality. The psychological underpinnings of this are complex and will clearly take many more years of effort to transform.

The most devastating and tragic expression of this rejection of women is the violence which kills or aims to kill. In Montreal, there is a constant incidence of domestic abuse. Women are beaten to the point of death. Where guns are possessed by abusers, they are used in actions of rage to kill women who have no means of defending themselves. These actions are, of course, illegal; however, they also do terrible damage to individuals and to society. As an organization associated with Pax Christi International, **Antennes de paix Montreal** strongly opposes all acts of abuse and violence which threaten or take away human life, thus negating the sanctity of life.

#### *Culture of violence and the use of weapons*

The proliferation of guns in our society points to a culture of violence. Conflict can be too easily "resolved" by the use of weapons. Persons with psychological imbalance have all too easy access to violent means of living out their fears and anger. The presence of weapons and the threat to use them implants fear and insecurity in our society. An inordinate amount of energy goes into living with this fear, an energy that could be given to creative means of resolving conflict, of building a culture of nonviolence.

Women know far too well what it is like to live in insecurity and threat. Their freedom is limited daily, restricting where they can go, when they can go, etc. As the presence of guns increases, even places that would normally be deemed secure, such as academic settings or places of worship, can at any moment turn into places of horror and death. This is unacceptable in Canadian society!

As the events of December 6, 1989, are remembered with sorrow, it is important to also remember the many acts of violence against women that do not involve guns. Abused women make it clear that they are more frequently violated by words which shame and humiliate, by

sexual invasion and control, by psychological control and dominance, by exclusion from positions of equality, by denial of educational opportunities etc. etc. All of these must be seen as violence. They kill the spirit; they leave wounds that go deep into the core of the human person. Death through violence is unacceptable; so also is diminished life, life deeply wounded by undeserved actions.

*Support needed for gun control*

December 6, 1989, has sparked determination throughout the world to make changes in our culture of violence, particularly violence against women. Here in Canada a gun control movement was initiated, and efforts have been made to strengthen Canada's gun control laws. In 1995, Canada's Firearms Act was passed and it was a monument to the memory of the victims of the massacre of the Ecole Polytechnique. The families of these victims have been very much involved in this movement. They have been somewhat comforted by the establishment of the Firearms Registry, used by Canadian police at all levels. These families, and others across Canada who support gun control, are deeply concerned that this hard work is now threatened by those who would erode or discontinue the Firearms Registry.

Antennes de paix's working group on arms trafficking believes that our Canadian society must continue to consider the tremendous danger to all, and particularly women, when arms can be purchased without restriction or accountability. All citizens who have similar concerns are encouraged to communicate with their MPs, supporting strengthening the Firearms Registry. The plea of Mme. Suzanne Laplante-Edward, mother of victim Anne-Marie Edward who died on December 6, 1989, is a call to us all: *Help me keep our daughters' legacy alive.*

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