



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Stop Child Sex Vacations by Registered Child Sex Offenders

WINNIPEG, MB – Beyond Borders ECPAT Canada urges the Government of Canada to take further steps to protect children from child sex tourism. Ground-breaking changes to law have been made in both Australia and the United States that will have a real and marked effect on the safety of vulnerable children around the World. We MUST, as a Nation, follow suit and amend our laws to require mandatory rather than discretionary cancellation of sex offenders' passports in appropriate circumstances. We MUST also require that all passports of registered sex offenders who have committed designated offences against children be marked to provide other countries with notice that a Canadian registered sex offender is seeking entry to their country...and potentially, their children. We must prioritize the rights of children to be free from sexual violence from known child sexual offenders.

To mark National Child Day on November 20, 2017, Beyond Borders ECPAT Canada issues the following call to action and petition for Canadians at www.change.org

BEYOND BORDERS ECPAT CANADA CALL TO ACTION

CANADA: WE NEED YOUR HELP. GOVERNMENT MUST TAKE ACTION.

STOP CHILD SEX VACATIONS BY REGISTERED SEX OFFENDERS

We know that under existing Canadian law, registered sex offenders who have committed sexual offences against children can have a valid Canadian passport. Barring travel restrictions connected with a sentence or parole, this means that those same sex offenders, who have previously committed sexual acts against children and who are required to be registered on the Sex Offender Registry, can in fact travel to other countries – many of which are target destinations for child sex tourism. Those countries – who may have limited resources – may not even be aware that they are granting entry to a convicted child sex offender. That sex offender can proceed to hurt children abroad. They can "volunteer" in orphanages, "teach" in international schools, or take just take a limited "vacation".

While Canada has made some very positive legal and policy changes to enhance protections for children, Canadian law does not go far enough.

Other developed nations such as Australia and the United States have taken ground breaking steps to combat child sex tourism by registered sex offenders:

A. THE AUSTRALIA EFFECT: MANDATORY CANCELLATION

Australia, through its Passports Legislation Amendment (Overseas Travel by Child Sex Offenders) Act 2017, will make it mandatory that their Minister MUST upon request of a competent authority, cancel an Australian passport that has been issued to a registered child sex offender who is convicted of determined offences and who is otherwise required to be registered.

In Canada, the right of the Minister to cancel a child sex offender's passport is DISCRETIONARY. We must, as a matter of law, draw a line in the sand.

We must in the same manner as adopted by Australia, make this cancellation by the Minister mandatory.

B. THE UNITED STATES MOVES FORWARD: IF YOU ARE CONVICTED OF SEXUAL OFFENCES AGAINST CHILDREN, YOUR PASSPORTS WILL BE MARKED TO ALLOW FOREIGN JURISDICTIONS TO BE ON NOTICE

Under the law commonly referred to as International Megan's Law in the United States, the United States Government is taking steps to curb the liberties of convicted child sex offenders.

The United States State Department has made the announcement that it will begin revoking passports belonging to covered sex offenders who have been convicted of sexual offences against children. Where passports will be reissued to those offenders, such person's passport will include the statement:

"The bearer was convicted of a sex offense against a minor, and is a covered sex offender pursuant to (U.S. law)."

As Canadians, we must tell the Government of Canada that it is our country's responsibility to prevent further harm to children by limiting the travel of child sex offenders, whereas they pose a real and substantial risk to vulnerable children abroad. Where travel is permitted, we must give other foreign jurisdictions notice that individuals who may pose a threat to children are at their borders.

Like the United States, we must enact legislation allowing the cancellation of passports for registered sex offenders who have been convicted of designated offences against children. Such offenders could reapply for their passports, and if issued, those passports would contain a similar statement, such as "The bearer was convicted of a sexual offense against a minor, and is a sex offender required to be registered under Canadian law."

Other countries, including in the developing world, would then be far better equipped to protect their children from traveling predators and child sex tourists. They could simply and easily deny entry.

C. WHY HAS CANADA NOT TAKEN THESE STEPS ALREADY?

Canadian law is complicated on this point. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms provides that mobility is a fundamental human right at law. The drafters of our Charter, however, recognized that those rights set out in the Charter are not absolute – they must be subject to reasonable limits in a free and democratic society. Given the existence of the concept of "reasonable limits" that exists in our Charter, we do have the ability at law to make the changes requested above. These changes would make a real and meaningful difference in the ability to prevent child sex tourism and egregious harm to child victims.

We simply have to have the courage to fight the battle and to take these steps forward. We must, as a society, recognize that the reasonable limits enshrined in our Charter apply here – we must prioritize the safety of vulnerable children over the mobility rights of known child sex offenders. If that is not a reasonable limit, then what is?

Join Beyond Borders ECPAT Canada in a petition to the Canadian government through the Right Honourable Ahmed Hussen, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship:

To amend Canadian law to make mandatory that the Minister MUST upon request of a competent authority, cancel a Canadian passport that has been issued to a registered child sex offender who is convicted of determined offences and who is otherwise required to be registered as a sex offender at law.

To amend the Canadian Passport Order and to enact Canadian legislation that allows for the cancellation of the passports of registered sex offenders who have committed offences against children, and upon reissuance of those passports, to require that those passports be marked to provide notice of that person's status as a registered child sex offender, for example "The bearer was convicted of a sexual offense against a minor, and is a sex offender required to be registered under Canadian law."

***Stop Child Sex Vacations by Registered Child Sex Offenders - petition at www.change.org
Fact sheets on National Sex Offender Registry and Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the
Canadian Passport order available at – www.beyondborders.org/en/publications/fact-sheets/***

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Beyond Borders ECPAT Canada is a bilingual national advocacy organization advancing the rights of children everywhere to be free from sexual abuse and exploitation. We are a registered charity without political or religious affiliation. Beyond Borders ECPAT Canada is the Canadian representative of ECPAT International, a global network of more than 90 organizations in 88 countries dedicated to ending child prostitution, child pornography, and the trafficking of children for sexual purposes around the world.

www.beyondborders.org

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