

Every month RESURJ members will collectively share and reflect on some news highlights affecting sexual and reproductive, environmental and economic justice from the different regions and countries we work in... [read online](#)

The “serious pervasive and systemic problem” of violence against Indigenous, disabled and refugee and migrant women and girls in Canada

By Nelly Bassily

In April 2018, the United Nations Special Rapporteur (SR) on Violence Against Women completed a 13-day visit to Canada. In her [preliminary findings](#), the SR pointed to three key groups of women who bear the brunt of violence in Canada: Indigenous women and girls, women and girls with disabilities and women who are asylum seekers, refugees and migrants. Violence against these three groups is indeed pervasive and systemic.

In the last couple of years, the increase in activism by Indigenous groups around missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and the over-incarceration of Indigenous women has placed at the forefront, as the SR indicated in her preliminary report, the “marginalization, exclusion, and poverty because of institutional, systemic, multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination that has not been addressed adequately by the State.”

When it comes to women and girls with disabilities in Canada, [statistics from the 2014 General Social Survey on Victimization](#) show that “women with a disability were twice as likely as women who did not have a disability to have been a victim of violent crime”, “women with a disability were nearly twice as likely as women without a disability to have been sexually assaulted” and “more than one in five women with a disability experienced emotional, financial, physical or sexual violence or abuse committed by a current or former partner.”

For women who are asylum seekers, refugees and migrants, Canada’s immigration system puts them at increased risk of violence. For example, sponsored spouses have stringent conditions imposed on them to obtain permanent residency in Canada, which puts sponsored migrant women at increased risk of domestic violence and traps them

in abusive relationships. Also, the immigration system puts women temporary foreign workers such as domestic workers and live-in caregivers at increased risks of abuse and exploitation.

This excerpt is from an article published on the [South Feminist Voices](#) blog. To read the full article, [click here](#).

Sextortion: One of the many thorns in the Nigerian Feminist Movement’s Side

By Fadekemi Akinfaderin

Many have heard the term ‘sextortion’ in the context of using sexual information or images as blackmail; something that has gained more visibility with the growth of social media and increased use of mobile technology globally. The term is also used to describe a form of corruption, in which individuals abuse their position, privileges and power to gain sexual favors. The [Tanzania Women’s Movement](#) are engaging in several campaigns aimed at including “sextortion” or [sexual corruption](#) in laws, policies and anti-corruption initiatives in the country.

The case of a professor at the [Obafemi Awolowo University](#) (OAU), one of Nigeria’s most prestigious and well respected universities, made headlines in Nigeria in the past two weeks. An [audio recording](#) of the professor negotiating the number of sexual episodes he would have with his student to change her grades made the rounds on social media and eventually hit most of the major [news media](#) channels. The output of rage towards him, might have influenced the decision of the school administration to [suspend](#) the professor and initiate a probe into the matter. Sadly, this is not the first case of sexual extortion and doesn’t look like it might be the last either.

Last year (2017), the head of [Law faculty at University of Calabar](#) (UNICAL) was suspended for raping a student, even though the case was reported in 2015. In 2016, the head of [the English department at University of Ilorin](#) resigned after the [audio](#) of his “sextortion” case was shared on social

media. In 2010/2011, an [engineering professor at Ambrose Ali University](#) (AAU) was recorded by his student who came to her apartment for sex after failing her in her exams. With the cases that have come into the public eye, and with so many more that go unreported, one would expect that a campaign like #MeToo would sweep like wave across Nigeria, especially within the tertiary education system, and would force educational policy and management authorities to take a concrete action.

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Pakistan's #MeToo Moment and the Long Road Ahead

By Sheena Hadi

Recently in Pakistan, an unusual news story broke, setting it apart from the tired political news headlines.

Meesha Shafi, a well-known singer and actress, accused a male colleague of sexual harassment. This colleague was no ordinary, behind-the-scenes man. It was Ali Zafar, a man who has dominated the music industry for two decades and can safely be called one of the leading 'heartthrobs' of the nation. In no uncertain terms, Shafi stated on twitter "I have been subjected, on more than one occasion, to sexual harassment of a physical nature at the hands of a colleague from my industry: Ali Zafar." She went on to [write](#), "Today, I speak up because my conscience does not allow me to be silent anymore. If this can happen to someone like me, an established artist, then it can happen to any young woman hoping to break into the industry and that concerns me gravely."

The response from Zafar was quick, denying all claims of harassment and referencing his role as a "family man" who "respects women professionally". The response on social media was even swifter, with fans not hesitating to begin the victim blaming and survivor shaming in defense of Zafar. The fact that Shafi is a public face with ample online images and a reputation for being a strong-minded woman, simply added to the trolling. Men used the opportunity to defame her character, often resorting to "Islamic values" and the question; why-did-she wait-this-long-to-tell?. Other women were equally vicious sharing commentaries on her looks, clothes, proximity to Zafar in previous photos, and of course, the "fact" that such a strong

woman would not take being molested. The real facts are slowly gaining ground, with each [new accusation from a survivor](#) having largely been overlooked and quickly swept aside, seen as women trying to 'get a piece of the publicity'. Neither has the verbal punishment for Shafi taken into consideration the monstrous feat of speaking out publicly with full knowledge that the online shaming and media dissection was going to be inevitable. [As journalist Mehr Tarir writes](#), "To even assume that in a blatantly patriarchal and gleefully misogynistic society like ours, a woman celebrity would risk her personal and professional reputation to accuse a huge star of sexual molestation – it is preposterous."

Yet while the response to Shafi's revelation reconfirms the progress that still needs to be made in terms of women's rights as well as the power online spaces now hold as virtual courtrooms, it has inevitably sparked a level of dialogue on the issue. It is possible that the tarnishing of a reputation as impenetrable as Zafar's, can send a strong message to powerful men who have up until now, largely operated without accountability. It won't be surprising to see a negative impact on Shafi's career, but perhaps Zafar won't receive that next big endorsement and then, at least, it may have been worth it.