

VOICES-VOIX

News Release

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Government Called on to Be Transparent and Respect Democracy, Freedom of Expression

A new coalition, Voices-Voix, is sounding the alarm that the quality and health of democratic life in Canada is under serious threat. Voices-Voix released today its "Raise Your Voices" Declaration signed by human rights, women's, labour, environment, student, faith-based and development organizations.

The Declaration calls on the government to respect the right to freedom of opinion and expression, act in accordance with Canada's democratic traditions and values and be transparent.

"Voices-Voix, came together because of growing and serious concerns that the space for dissent and debate in Canada is rapidly shrinking," says Alex Neve, Secretary General of Amnesty International Canada. "It is vitally important that concrete steps be taken immediately to arrest this erosion. Canada's reputation as a human rights leader is on the line."

The "Raise Your Voices" Declaration asserts that "Since 2006, the Government of Canada has systematically undermined democratic institutions and practices, and has eroded the protection of free speech, and other fundamental human rights. It has deliberately set out to silence the voices of organizations or individuals who raise concerns about government policies or disagree with government positions."

"The Voice-Voix coalition is demanding that this government stop targeting and undermining organizations that speak out to change or challenge government policy," says Gerry Barr, President and CEO of the Canadian Council for International Co-operation. "If you shut down diversity, there will be weak policy debate and that means bad public policy."

Leilani Farha, Executive Director of the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation says, "the government can use its power to deny organizations funding or fire people to silence their critique, but Voices is a declaration that we will not disappear, that we will claim human rights and we will defend our democratic space".

The "Raise Your Voices" Declaration is available at: <http://www.voices-voix.ca>

Alex Neve, Gerry Barr, Leilani Farha are available for interviews.

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