DOI: 10.30612/mones.v15i29.20903

MONÇÕES
Revista de Relações Internacionais da UFGD

Indigenous feminicide and the global politics answer: the cases of Canada and Brazil

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Abstract: This article analyzes the political and legal responses to Indigenous feminicide in the global arena, understanding it as a continuous manifestation of postcolonial violence. Globally, Indigenous women and girls remain among the groups at highest risk of lethality, although the systemic lack of data and criminal under-reporting hinder an exact assessment of the phenomenon's prevalence. To ground these global dynamics, this study adopts Canada and Brazil as comparative case studies. This choice is justified because, despite occupying distinct geopolitical and economic positions in the Global North and South, both nations share a historical foundation of settler colonialism. This heritage perpetuates intersectional vulnerability through land expropriation, marginalization, and evident State complicity and impunity. It intersects decolonial feminist perspectives, ranging from the debate on "colonial femicide" and police negligence in Canada to the consolidation of the concept as a State crime in Brazil. The article concludes that tackling this epidemic requires a coordinated response in international relations that recognizes and integrates Indigenous struggles for self-determination and sovereignty.

Key words: Indigenous femicide; gender-based violence; colonial feminicide; state crime

Feminicídio indígena e respostas da política global: os casos do Canadá e do Brasil

Resumo: Este artigo analisa as respostas políticas e jurídicas ao feminicídio indígena no cenário global, entendendo-o como uma manifestação contínua da violência pós-colonial. Globalmente, mulheres e meninas indígenas permanecem entre os grupos com maior risco de letalidade, embora a falta sistêmica de dados e a subnotificação criminal dificultem uma avaliação precisa da prevalência do fenômeno. Para contextualizar essas dinâmicas globais, este estudo adota o Canadá e o Brasil como estudos de caso comparativos. Essa escolha se justifica porque, apesar de ocuparem posições geopolíticas e econômicas distintas no Norte e no Sul globais, ambas as nações compartilham uma base histórica de colonialismo de povoamento. Essa herança perpetua a vulnerabilidade interseccional por meio da expropriação de terras, da marginalização e da evidente cumplicidade e impunidade do Estado. O artigo entrecruza perspectivas feministas decoloniais, desde o debate sobre o "feminicídio colonial" e a negligência policial no Canadá até a consolidação do conceito como crime de Estado no Brasil. A análise conclui que o combate a essa epidemia exige uma resposta coordenada nas relações internacionais, que reconheça e integre as lutas indígenas pela autodeterminação e soberania.

Palavras-chave: feminicídio indígena; violência baseada em gênero; feminicídio colonial; crime de Estado

Feminicidio indígena y respuestas de la política global: los casos de Canadá y de Brasil

Resumen: Este artículo analiza las respuestas políticas y legales al feminicidio indígena en el ámbito global, entendiéndolo como una manifestación continua de la violencia poscolonial. A nivel mundial,

las mujeres y niñas indígenas siguen estando entre los grupos con mayor riesgo de letalidad, si bien la falta sistémica de datos y la subnotificación criminal dificultan una evaluación precisa de la prevalencia del fenómeno. Para contextualizar estas dinámicas globales, este estudio adopta a Canadá y Brasil como casos de estudio comparativos. Esta decisión se justifica porque, a pesar de ocupar posiciones geopolíticas y económicas distintas en el Norte y el Sur globales, ambas naciones comparten una base histórica de colonialismo de asentamiento. Este legado perpetúa la vulnerabilidad interseccional a través de la expropiación de tierras, la marginación y la evidente complicidad e impunidad del Estado. El artículo entrecruza perspectivas feministas decoloniales, desde el debate sobre el "femicidio colonial" y la negligencia policial en Canadá hasta la consolidación del concepto como crimen de Estado en Brasil. El análisis concluye que abordar esta epidemia requiere una respuesta coordinada en las relaciones internacionales, que reconozca e integre las luchas indígenas por la autodeterminación y la soberanía.

Palabras-clave: feminicidio indígena; violencia basada en género; feminicidio colonial; crimen de Estado

Recebido em: 24/11/2025
Aceito em: 12/05/2026

INTRODUCTION

In the last five decades, there has been an expansion of the notion of "femicide" in social, criminological, and epidemiological research to grasp the basic differences of the killing of a female in opposition to that of a male (Corradi et *al.*, 2018; Corradi; Bandelli, 2019). One of its main purposes is to raise awareness to a specific form of crime that should not be confused with the gender-neutral term "homicide" (Corradi; Bandelli, 2019). Despite the increasing global awareness[1] of the problem since the 2010s and its impetus for institutionalizing States' responses against femicide (Di Marco; Dawson, 2024), its conceptualization and political implications vary according to the local sociopolitical context.

Definition plays an important role in the official recognition of the killing of women as femicide (Aujla et *al.*, 2023). Indeed, the problem may lead to a specific solution, depending on the way the problem is defined (Grzyb et *al.*, 2018). In the case of feminicide that finds its causes in gender injustice, social injustice, racial injustice, and discrimination, the definition underlines a political dimension, adding to its social dimension. The term "femicide" is known to first have appeared in the book by John Corry, in 1801, titled *A Satirical View of London at the Commencement of the Nineteenth Century* to refer to the killing of a woman (Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability, 2025). Later, the term was introduced by the South African Professor, Diana E.H. Russell, at a symposium called "The International Tribunal of Crimes Against Women to bring attention to male violence and discrimination against women" (Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability, 2025). By placing "femicide" in a broader feminist framework, Russell added a critical political meaning to it (Grzyb et *al.*, 2018), with the purpose of producing changes in a social order which is blind to the killing of women because of their gender (Weil; Naudi, 2013).

When used by Marcela Lagarde (2006), the term "*feminicidio*" identifies the murder of women and girls as a gendered State crime and a systemic violation of women's human and citizenship rights or, more specifically, a crime that occurs when the historical conditions generate social practices allowing violent attempts against the integrity, health, liberties, and lives of women and girls (García-Del Moral, 2025). Therefore, feminicide implies the understanding that the State, as a set of patriarchal institutions, condones the actions of individual perpetrators, by State or non-State actors, who feel a sense of ownership and/or entitlement over women's lives and bodies (García-Del Moral, 2025). In other words, by failing to guarantee women's right to live free of violence through action or inaction, the State is complicit in feminicide (García-Del Moral, 2025).

1 For instance, the term "feminicide" first appeared in an official document of the United Nations (UN) in 2014, with the adoption of the Resolution 68/191 by the United Nations General Assembly (Corradi et *al.*, 2018; Corradi; Bandelli, 2019).

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Given these considerations, the phenomenon has become more visible, especially due to the work of women's social movements. In the past two decades, countries such as Mexico and Canada, as well as the whole North American region, have experienced significant increases (Di Marco; Dawson, 2024), leading some authors to consider such phenomenon a "global epidemic" (Bejarano, 2023). It is difficult to estimate its dimension with accuracy, however, since national homicide data often lack the required contextual information to identify a killing as gender-related (Smith, 2018; Schröttle; Meshkova, 2018; Dunaiski et *al*., 2024). It is also challenging to compare country-by-country data since there isn't a globally accepted definition, in addition to contrasting data-collection practices among countries (Smith, 2018). Moreover, in most places femicide is not defined as a distinct type of crime (Schröttle; Meshkova, 2018).

In the case of Indigenous femicide, finding specific data is even harder. According to recent reports from women's movements and social media, lethal violence against Indigenous women has seen growth especially in South Africa and Latin America (Ordorica, 2022). The Rapporteur on the rights of women of the Inter American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) observed that the situation of Indigenous women and girls is particularly critical in the context of armed conflict, because they are victims of multiple forms of discrimination on the basis of race, age, ethnicity, and gender (United Nations, 2014). While visiting Colombia, for instance, the Rapporteur received complaints about the use of Indigenous women and girls as 'spoils of war' by armed actors (United Nations, 2014).

This article explores what is politically at stake in this debate, by analyzing two case studies: Canada and Brazil. As we will see in more details, in Canada the term "femicide" (rather than "feminicide") remains predominant in official statistics (García-Del Moral, 2025). However, Canadian Indigenous scholars and activists have increasingly challenged this concept, demanding that the deaths of Indigenous women be recognized as a "colonial" or "legal femicide", given their ties with the legacy of colonial laws and the historical negligence of the police and justice systems. But according to the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability (CFOJA) given the role of racialized violence and the documented impunity of some of the perpetrators, the term "feminicide" commonly used in Latin American countries may also be appropriate since it is meant to capture the impunity of perpetrators and the inadequate State responses to the murders of Indigenous women and girls (García-Del Moral, 2025).

Conversely, in Brazil, the term feminicide (*feminicídio*) is more firmly consolidated within public and legal debates. Heavily influenced by Latin American decolonial feminist thought, the concept extends beyond individual misogynistic homicide, by addressing the structural dimension and State complicity, which, through inaction or discriminatory policies, enables the perpetuation of violence. Within the Brazilian scenario, the feminicide of Indigenous women is inextricably linked to land expropriation, illegal mining and systemic marginalization. This problematic context has come to coexist, since 2015, with the approval of criminal law No.

13.104, which classifies as "feminicide" the homicide of women committed "on account of gender," particularly in contexts of domestic or family violence. According to Campos (2015), the criminalization of feminicide represents a historical achievement of the feminist movement in Brazil[2], as it legally recognizes the killing of women as a specific form of gender-based violence. This development resulted from a legislative process driven by the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on Violence Against Women (*CPMI da Violência contra a Mulher*), which sought to reinforce the "Maria da Penha Law" and to meet international commitments to combat gender violence (Campos, 2015). Despite the relevance of legal typification for visibility to misogynistic violence and ensuring the State's accountability, it must be accompanied by an intersectional approach and effective public policies to address the multiple forms of violence affecting women, particularly the most vulnerable (Campos, 2015).

The decision to analyze Canada and Brazil comparatively refers to the fact that both nations share a foundational history of settler colonialism. Despite their different political trajectories, nation-state building relied, in both countries, on territorial expropriation and structural violence against Indigenous populations. Consequently, both currently exhibit chronic under-reporting of intersectional data alongside disproportionately alarming rates of lethal violence against Indigenous women and girls when compared to non-Indigenous women. Comparing these two distinct realities demonstrates that Indigenous feminicide transcends regional borders; it constitutes a continuous pattern of postcolonial violence and State impunity that requires a coordinated response from global politics.

INDIGENOUS FEMICIDE IN CANADA AND BRAZIL: BETWEEN GLOBAL AND LOCAL TRENDS

In Canada and Brazil, femicide is steadily increasing, but the actual number of women killed for gender-related reasons might be higher than what official statistics indicate (for reasons already mentioned), and there is a significant gap between the incidence and prevalence. In Canada, femicide is largely invisibilized, most notably among migrant, Black and Indigenous women and girls (Aujla et *al.*, 2023). Besides, femicide is not officially recognized by the Canadian government as a distinct type of homicide (Aujla et *al.*, 2023). In its turn, Brazil is marked by high – and increasing – rates of feminicide (Souza-Leal et *al.*, 2018; Costa, 2025), with Indi-

2 However, Campos (2015) points to some limitations in the final wording of the law, particularly in the substitution of the term "gender reasons" with "the condition of being female" – a theoretical backlash resulting from the reduction of the concept of gender to a biological dimension. The author also criticizes the under-reporting of feminicides — especially those occurring outside domestic contexts — and warns against the use of inaccurate and stereotyped categories that obscure gender motivations in official records (Campos, 2015).

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genous women disproportionally affected[3] (Ferreira et *al*., 2025). This situation finds its roots as in the case of Canada in a multidimensional process of vulnerability, reflecting entrenched systemic violence, historical marginalization, and the State's failure to protect this population, in ongoing challenges with land rights, land dispossession, lack of access to justice, and the intersection of gender-based violence with social and cultural discrimination municipalities (Ferreira et *al*., 2025).

Unlike the Canadian context, which benefits from robust national reports, the analysis of the Brazilian case faces the challenge of a statistical "blind spot". This means that the disparity in data compared to Canada must not be interpreted as a lower incidence of femicide in Brazil, but as a structural failure in reporting such crime. The lack of data stems from structural issues, such as the manual recording of crimes and the institutional tendency to classify violence against Indigenous women merely as "cultural conflict" (Pessoa; Nascimento, 2022, p. 3).

In August 2021, the feminicide of the Indigenous teenager Daiane Griá Sales Kaingang, in the municipality of Redentora, state of Rio Grande do Sul, gained national attention due to the brutality of the crime. After being murdered, her body was found on a public road, naked and with signs of mutilation, on August 21 of that year. Four years later, in February 2025, Dieison Corrêa Zandavalli, a 36-year-old white man, was found guilty by a Jury Court and sentenced to 36 years in prison. During the investigation, evidence indicated the occurrence of rape of a minor on the victim's body.

The newspaper *Brasil de Fato* reported, on May 24, 2024, that the number of feminicides of Indigenous women had increased by 500% in Brazil from 2003 to 2022. According to the report, feminicides against Indigenous women and adolescents primarily affected young, single, and less-educated victims — such as Daiane. The data were drawn from the *Technical Report on Homicides of Indigenous Women and Adolescents in Brazil*, developed by the Federal University of Paraná (UFPR) and a landmark in data gathering on this topic, given the structural blind spots in statistics already mentioned here. The report shows a 500% increase in the homicides of Indigenous women and girls between 2003 and 2022, with the youngest, unmarried and less educated being the main victims, mainly committed in the Midwest region of Brazil – with Mato Grosso do Sul being the state with the highest absolute number (149) and rate (15.7 deaths per 100,000).

The *Atlas of Violence 2025* provides important indicators regarding homicides committed against Brazil's Indigenous population[4]. According to the *Atlas*, between 2013 and 2023, there was a general downward trend in homicide rates across Brazil (Atlas da Violência, 2025, p. 110).

3 According to Wanzinack et *al*. (2025), from 2010 to 2014, femicide rate for Indigenous women was 9.3/100,000, while for non-Indigenous women it was 3.8/100,000 (Wanzinack et *al*., 2025).

4 The *Atlas* no longer includes specific data on Indigenous feminicide, which illustrates the invisibilization of this phenomenon in official records.

However, when it comes to the Indigenous population, this decline is not observed: during the same period, lethal violence against Indigenous peoples remained higher than the national average. Nonetheless, the *Atlas of Violence* distinguishes between two statistical modalities: officially recorded homicides and hidden homicides. The latter corresponds to violent deaths not classified as "homicide" in official data but, through probabilistic analysis, are estimated so as to provide a more accurate picture of the real lethality rates. When these hidden homicides are included, the 2022 rate of homicides against Indigenous populations remains higher than the national average (Atlas da Violência, 2025, p. 110). As for the specific crime of feminicide, the *Atlas* only differentiates between the categories of Black women and non-Black women. Consequently, it is impossible to analyze the incidence of feminicide against Indigenous women based on this document. In the Brazilian context, this omission results in the non-recognition of a certain group of women who are also victims of feminicide – namely, Indigenous women.

In Canada, Indigenous women are disproportionately at higher risks, and this requires a need to prioritize examining responses to killings of this group of women and girls (Dawson, 2018). Collecting information on Indigenous status and other racial/ethnic groups from court records is a challenge, and missing information is also a problem in Canada (Dawson, 2018; Bourgeois, 2023). One example of such invisibility is the lack of quality race-based data in Canada, including any systematic efforts to document Indigenous, Black, and other racialized femicides (Aujla et *al*., 2023). This comes with a lack of an intersectional focus highlighting the impacts of overlapping oppressions and discrimination experienced by Indigenous and Black women in Canada (Aujla et *al*., 2023).

There are no exact figures of how many missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA[5] people are in Canada, but an estimation is that around 4,000 Indigenous women and girls have gone missing or been murdered between 1956 and 2016 (Flores; Alfaro, 2023). From 2011 to 2021, police reported that 21% of all gender-related homicides involved Indigenous women and girls, amounting to 233 victims (Aujla et *al*., 2023). According to an annual report on femicide in Canada, during the outbreak of Covid in 2020, 160 women and girls were killed (Hayes, 2021). A survey conducted by the Native Women's Association of Canada reveals that one in five had experienced physical or psychological violence during the last three months of the pandemic (Moffitt et al., 2022). It is in this sense that Bourgeois (2023) speaks about a femicidal epidemic: Indigenous women are almost three times more likely to be victims

5 2SLGBTQQIA+ is an institutional acronym used primarily in Canadian contexts, standing for Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual. The '2S' specifically represents Two-Spirit identities within Indigenous communities. 'Two-Spirit' is a culturally specific term used by North American Indigenous communities to describe individuals who embody both masculine and feminine traits, encompassing fluid gender identities, sexual orientations, and unique spiritual roles. It is distinct from Western LGBTQ+ categories and is officially recognized in Canadian institutional frameworks to ensure Indigenous representation.

of domestic violence than their non-Indigenous counterparts (Bush et al., 2014). According to data from Statistics Canada's 2014 General Social Survey on Victimization, Indigenous females reported rates of violent victimization that were double Indigenous males and almost triple that of non-Indigenous females (Bourgeois, 2023). Indigenous females reported experiencing physical assault at more than double the rate and sexual assault at more than triple the rate of non-Indigenous women (Bourgeois, 2023). When other risk factors were controlled, Indigenous identity remained a risk factor for victimization for Indigenous females (Bourgeois, 2023).

Recently, on October 14, 2024, at the 89th Session of the United Nation's Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in Geneva (Switzerland), Amnesty International mentioned Canada's record of the rising rates of femicide and anti-Black gender-based violence, the ongoing crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Peoples, and violence against Indigenous women in Ecuador in the context of Canada-Ecuador trade negotiations and resource extraction (Amnesty International, 2024).

Based on these observations, Bourgeois (2023) considers that phenomenon of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) is part of a broader pattern of violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls in Canada. In Canada, Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Peoples are missing and being murdered at alarming rates, but reported cases are actively dismissed by the criminal legal system, while disappearances and deaths are often miscategorized. Many of these feminicides occur in the context of sexual violence. There is the long history of Canadian police forces neglecting the violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls, including an unwillingness to file official reports and a tendency to explain deaths and disappearances as "misadventure" or "suicide" (Bush et al., 2014; Bourgeois, 2023). Finally, it is noteworthy the differentiated news coverage on feminicide between white and Indigenous women: according to Villalobos (2025), the former were mentioned in the local press a total of 511 times, compared with only 82 times in the case of the latter.

THE GLOBAL POLITICS ANSWER TO INDIGENOUS FEMICIDE AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR CANADA AND BRAZIL

While Indigenous struggles and movements have gained importance on global politics, Indigenous femicide is less visible on the global scene. Actions against Indigenous femicide appear mostly in feminist movements – among them, feminist scholars, who have politicized this global issue –, in transnational research, in international organizations like the UN and NGOs like Amnesty International, especially in the case of Canada where it has produced several alarming reports. Since the term "femicide' was coined, these social movements have helped increase awareness about this phenomenon which have served as a great impetus for institutionalizing States' responses against femicide (Di Marco; Dawson, 2024).

Around the world, organizations such as the United Nations, the World Health Organization, the Council of Europe, and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, to mention but a few, are now invested in combating femicide, in its local and global dimensions (Marcuello-Servós et al., 2016). As a result, there has been some progress in legal recognition, international resources, initiatives focusing on prevention, and government programs to address femicide (Brysk; Moreira, 2023). This has helped to name, define and recognize the killing of women and girls (Aujla et *al*., 2023), as well as giving an increasing visibility to this global social issue. Particularly, the United Nations has been exercising international leadership in many areas of the femicide issue; however, it wasn't until recently that the specific focus on the concept of "femicide" has been articulated and used in its instruments (Dussich, 2016). As we will see in the next sections, it is in the Inter-American legal system that a more notorious contribution to this global answer can be found.

Among those global resources, the Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms a State obligation to comply with due diligence to address the causes and consequences of femicide by declaring that "everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person" (Barberet; Baboolal, 2020). We find this principle of "State obligations" – and therefore the State responsibility – in Russell's and Lagarde's definition of "femicide". Here, it is particularly Lagarde's definition of "feminicide" that's relevant: as previously mentioned, it extends the concept of "femicide" and identifies it specifically as the murder of women and girls as a gendered State crime and a systemic violation of women's human and citizenship rights (García-Del Moral, 2025). This implies a State crime as a crime against humanity and genocide against women occurring when the historical conditions generate social practices allowing violent attempts against the integrity, health, liberties, and lives of women and girls (García-Del Moral, 2025). These social practices are created by the postcolonial State as a set of patriarchal institutions deriving from colonial practice legacy (García-Del Moral, 2025).

"State obligations" also appear in international legal conventions' definitions of "femicide". For instance, the UN has approved a declaration against violence towards women, recognizing femicide/feminicide as an expanding phenomenon, and giving a broad definition of it. The term "femicide" was introduced at the 1976 International Tribunal on Crimes (Bush et al., 2014). There is an increasing tendency among States to criminalize femicide at the national level, offering specific definitions as well as special provisions for investigation and prosecution, given they call for prevention and prosecution of femicide (Barberet; Baboolal, 2020). This influence can be perceived also in the Organization of American States' Inter-American Convention and how it has since dealt with this growing issue, and "The cotton field case" (*The Algodonero Case*) at the IACHR that has brought a huge contribution in this global legal and political answer.

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The Inter-American Convention on The Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence Against Women, called The Belém do Pará Convention is a legally binding instrument adopted in 1994 in the Brazilian city of Belém do Pará (Da Silva, 2025). It is an international organization at the regional level and a periodic follow-up reporting system. This convention was the first intergovernmental agreement to legally bind signatory States, as well as a political and strategic framework for the adoption of coordinated laws and policies and the implementation of policies to criminalize all forms of violence against women, particularly sexual violence. It was also the first international instrument to establish mechanisms for protecting and defending women's rights as essential to combating the phenomenon of violence against women's physical, sexual and psychological integrity, in the public or the private sphere, and for asserting those rights within society (Da Silva, 2025).

The Belém do Pará Convention is an instrument in advancing women's rights and in providing a framework for States parties to address and eradicate violence against women, as one of the most pervasive and deeply rooted human rights violations and abuses of contemporary time. One of its rules is that the countries subscribing to the convention must protect the right of women to a life free from violence in public and private spheres. The Convention also prescribes certain duties to State actors like including and modifying legal reforms; promoting measures to prevent, penalize and eradicate violence against women; encouraging educational, social, cultural, and political programs of awareness on gender violence; and ensuring statistics and research (Marszałkowska, 2022). As of March 2020, 32 of the 34-member Organization of American States (OAS) have signed the Convention. Canada has signed the Convention recently in March 2025 (Government of Canada, 2025).

In 2009, with "The cotton field case", the IACHR became the first international authority to judge a case of feminicide and, after seven years of juridical analysis and hearings, to sentence the Mexican State for human rights violations (Corradi; Bandelli, 2019). The Court ruled against Mexico for the State's failure to protect three young women from being abducted, tortured, and murdered in Ciudad Juárez. The case is considered as a landmark human rights case, both for the use of the term "femicide" in an international court for the first time, and for the establishment of a new precedent for State responsibility in cases of violence against women. The case highlighted the State's failure to conduct a prompt and thorough investigation, finding those responsible, and preventing such crimes.

Furthermore, the word "feminicidio" was recognized by the Mexican Academy of Language (Corradi; Bandelli, 2019). The importance of this case resides in the fact that it puts this political concept in international circulation (Marszałkowska, 2022). The judgment of the Cotton Field case has led to a trend in Latin America and the Caribbean to criminalize femicide as a separate crime. In 2018, Paraguay became the 18th country out of 33 in the region to have a specific crime of femicide (Marszałkowska, 2022).

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Why since its creation in 1994 the USA and Canada have refused to sign The Belém do Pará Convention? And why Canada just decided to sign it in 2025, 31 years after its creation? Is there an explanation for why Canada took so long to accede to the Belém do Pará Convention? We haven't found answers to these questions in the scientific sources and literature. Canada explains this decision with the wish to reaffirm its longstanding commitment to human rights, gender equality, and the prevention and elimination of gender-based violence (Government of Canada, 2025). Those questions are relevant and need answers, so we can speculate that Canada aligned with the United States (both postcolonial States) to follow the latter's tradition and international position to avoid international binding convention to escape its responsibilities and compensation for victims. Since the return to power of President Donald Trump with his second term, there has been a dealignment between the USA and Canada regarding their bilateral relations, and international relations, that led Canada to sign this convention. But this explanation needs further inquiry to be confirmed, therefore our study opens new research venues.

In the rest of America, The Belém do Pará Convention has contributed to the adoption of national action plans by at least nine Latin American countries. This includes Mexico's system of femicide alerts and targeted intervention (Marszałkowska, 2022; Brysk; Moreira, 2023). The Inter-American Court of Human Rights played a crucial role in demonstrating the centrality of eradicating femicides in the broader human rights mission (Marszałkowska, 2022).

As previously mentioned, the Cotton Field case became the starting point of departure for the Court's commitment to highlighting the State obligation to protect the right of women to live free from violence (Marszałkowska, 2022). Then this regional legislation has been gradually translated into reforms in national criminal justice systems with the aim to effectively address femicide (Marszałkowska, 2022). This has driven all Latin American countries (except Cuba and Haiti) to approve laws that penalize femicide, and thirteen of them have also introduced a comprehensive law against violence (Marszałkowska, 2022).

Because it binds States, The Belém do Pará Convention and its decisions have a huge influence in the judiciary system in Latin America, especially where it has offered a judiciary framework to address femicide by providing justice to the victim, and a concrete legal and political answer and solution. In addition, to this influence we can add the huge contribution of The Cotton Field case.

In Brazil, the Maria da Penha Law, the Brazilian Penal Code and the Red Signal Program address gender-based violence (Da Silva, 2025). In the landmark case Maria da Penha Maia Fernandes v. Brazil, for the first time, the IACHR judged a domestic violence case involving a woman and found a State in violation of women's rights. In response to the recommendations made by the IACHR following the sentence, the Brazilian federal government approved, in 2006, the Maria da Penha Law (Da Silva, 2025). Among other measures, the Maria da Penha Law

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created mechanisms to curb domestic and family violence against women by providing for the creation of Courts for Domestic and Family Violence against Women[6], amending the Code of Criminal Procedure, the Penal Code and the Penal Enforcement Law (Da Silva, 2025). Another response to the recommendations made by the IACHR was the amendment of article 121 of the Brazilian Penal Code, thereby incorporating feminicide as a qualifying circumstance for the crime of homicide, as well as including feminicide in the list of heinous crimes (Da Silva, 2025).

In its 2001 IACHR report, the IACHR made statements that assert the need for a coordinated response from the government and civil society to address the multifaceted types of violence against women within the Americas (Da Silva, 2025). To Da Silva, (2025) those statements contributed significantly to the debate on domestic violence against women in Brazil, because the report made a detailed summary of the case exposing both parties' position, analyzing the law applicable to the case while presenting its conclusion and proposed recommendations. In Chapter III of its 2008 Annual Report, the IACHR said that in 2001, the Commission found Brazil responsible for several violations, including the failure to carry out duties stated in Article 7 of the IACHR of Belém do Pará (Da Silva, 2025).

A WEAK ANSWER DUE TO THE SYSTEMIC STRUCTURES OF SETTLER COLONIALISM

As for the global politics answer to global Indigenous femicide specifically, there is little information in the literature, but we can quote the work of Amnesty International and Pérez (2021) who writes an article that is one of the rarest to describe actions against Indigenous femicide at the global scale and in the global politics. Amnesty International is another actor from the global scene that provides global action to global Indigenous femicide, through their reports, denunciations, and support to victims' family, support and collaboration with Indigenous communities and organizations. Amnesty International through their reports published and denunciations on the global scene and in the media reach the UN. They participate actively in UN conferences on this matter. Amnesty has provided several reports on Indigenous femicide in Canada. Those reports clearly state that the acts of violence against Indigenous women are rooted in society's general attitudes reflecting widely across institutions that are established to protect citizens, such as the police, in the colonial context of gendered racial violence faced by many Indigenous women in Canada (Kuokkanen, 2008; Flores; Alfaro, 2023).

6 Years later, in 2021, Maria da Penha Law had its protection system strengthened by Law n. 14.188, which created the Red Signal Program as a mechanism for combating domestic and family violence against women, modifying the modality of the penalty to minor bodily injury committed against women for reasons of the female sex, and creating the criminal type of psychological violence against women (Da Silva, 2025).

For instance, in 2004, Amnesty International collaborated with the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) to release the first report assessing the issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) in "Canada." One of the report's main findings was that Indigenous women were overpoliced but under-protected (Flores; Alfaro, 2023).

Another recent example of the actions of Amnesty International, on October 14, 2024, at the 89th Session of the United Nation's Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in Geneva (Switzerland), in a public briefing Amnesty International mentioned Canada's record of the rising rates of femicide and anti-Black gender-based violence, the ongoing crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Peoples, and violence against Indigenous women in Ecuador in the context of Canada-Ecuador trade negotiations and resource extraction (Amnesty International, 2024). Pérez (2021) discusses gender equality and murdered and missing Indigenous women in the framework of the sustainable development goals (SDG), SDG 5 and missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada. Indeed, femicide is a key global indicator of progress towards gender equality, implying all five gender dimensions in the indicators of violence used to measure progress towards United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 5, 11 and 16 (Walby, 2023).

In the discussion implying gender equality and murdered and missing Indigenous women in the framework the sustainable development goals (SDG), Pérez (2021) lists the UN Declaration of Human Rights, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW); The UN Decade for Women Sustainable Development Goals (Pérez, 2021). Given the history of interest in the advancement of women's rights within international institutions, the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals as an advancement of this previous effort to center gender equality as a global issue must be understood (Pérez, 2021).

In 2015, the UN General Assembly launched the 2030 Agenda and the 25 implementations of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and its preamble highlights the commitment of all countries and stakeholders to the development of a more equal and freer world by accounting for the needs of people, the planet and the prosperity of humankind in pursuing a sustainable development and the eradication of poverty and inequality (Pérez, 2021). The Agenda recognizes the need for gender equality as a basic human right in all legal, social and economic aspects, recognizing the need to end gender inequality as a key challenge to sustainability and calling upon a broad and systemic implementation of a gender perspective in the implementation of all goals to ensure the progress of the Agenda (Pérez, 2021). Thus, 2030 Agenda acknowledges Gender Equality as a key SDG, assigning SDG 5 to the specific advancement of the issue (Pérez, 2021). In additions, this follows the efforts advanced in the Beijing Declaration (1995) and the CEDAW Convention concluding (1979) that "gender equality" broadly concerns two issues faced by women: to finalize discriminatory practices against women, which constitute a violation of their human rights and to end all forms of violence experienced

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by women across the world in accordance with the provisions and calls to action outlined in the Beijing Declaration (Pérez, 2021).

For the purposes of understanding the discrimination and violence suffered by Indigenous women, conducive to the cases of Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women, within this understanding of 'gender equality', Pérez (2021) considers targets 5.1 and 5.2 of SDG 5. Target 5.1 states to "End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere", whereas target 5.2 calls up to "eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation". In the SDG 5 and missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada analysis, Pérez (2021) writes that Canada submitted its voluntary national review on the implementation of Agenda 2030 in 2018, reporting the progress made towards the advancements of the SDG targets 5.1 and 5.2 containing some significant data. For instance, regarding Indigenous women, the report confirms the tendencies of over-representation of violent victimization of Indigenous women in comparison to their non-Indigenous counterparts (Pérez, 2021).

Maroto Pérez (2021) observes that Resolution A/RES/70/1 acknowledges the need to provide Indigenous peoples with consultative status over the monitoring of the SDGs and the implementation of the agenda, as well as disaggregation of data as needed, the report doesn't mention follow-through in any of these commitments in the 2018 voluntary review. As for the SDG 5, the author notes the lack of specific data on sex-trade and sex work as well as cases of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. This is an important weakness of the SDG framework, while targets 5.1 and 5.2 are meant to visibilize and inform policy to move beyond gender-based discrimination and gender-based violence (Pérez, 2021).

The author adds that these concerns were already expressed by the Indigenous Peoples Major Group (IMPG) in 2016 warning that, although the SDG framework could be useful in the advancement of issues such as the preservation of Indigenous land and self-determination over agricultural production, the 2030 Agenda also undermined and ignored Indigenous specific-issues and contributions to sustainability (Pérez, 2021). This issue leads to an invisibilization causing the underfunding of key programs and initiatives that are key to Indigenous communities, and in the context of MMIW in Canada, the absolute eradication of Indigenous concerns with regard to gender equality form the official and institutional narrative of progress (Pérez, 2021). Pérez (2021) concludes that the framework of SDG 5 and its targets on the elimination of gender-based discrimination (5.1) and gender-based violence (5.2) are still rooted in the colonial concerns of violence and discrimination as singular incidents in the intimate realm, in addition they fail to produce a framework that can hold accountable the ongoing practices of settler colonialism in states where Indigenous populations create an overlap of intersected identities and conflicting interests with the State.

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THE NEED FOR A DECOLONIAL AND INTERSECTIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON INDIGENOUS FEMINICIDE

Modernity was consolidated as an expression of European supremacy, disseminating epistemological, political, and historical conceptions that privilege rationalism, liberalism, and progress as universal pillars. In the field of human rights, this dominant perspective narrates a limited history centered on the modern West, disregarding the experiences and claims of colonized populations (Bragato, 2014). The colonial legacy — marked by genocide, slavery, expropriation, and racism — exposes the contradictions of a conception that claims universality while systematically excluding peripheral subjects from the category of humanity (Bragato, 2014). European colonial expansion was not limited to the imposition of economic and political domination on a global scale but also disseminated its epistemological frameworks, encompassing everything from instrumental rationality to political models of governance that shaped modern thought (Bragato, 2014).

Within this context, the decolonial approach proposes a rupture with the Eurocentric narrative, recognizing human rights as a plural and historically contingent construction shaped by multiple agents and contexts (Bragato, 2014). By incorporating the voices and experiences of marginalized peoples, this perspective broadens the normative horizon of human rights and challenges the centrality of European modernity. Reformulating this discourse requires valuing peripheral knowledges and acknowledging that the universality of rights is only achievable when all societies can recognize themselves within their definition and practice (Bragato, 2014).

Thus, decoloniality emerges as a critical movement that challenges the structures of power inherited from colonialism and imperialism. It seeks to denaturalize Eurocentric epistemes and to valorize historically silenced knowledges. Decolonizing thought is an act of reclaiming being—a process of reasserting authentic humanity for colonized peoples and breaking with the persistent effects of colonialism on the mind and subjectivity (Bragato, 2014). In the feminist field, decoloniality offers analytical tools to understand the interconnections between race, gender, sexuality, class, and territory (Lugones, 2007, 2008; see also Daltoé, 2020). Decolonial feminism not only denounces patriarchal oppression but also the coloniality that shapes the bodies and knowledges of racialized and Indigenous women (Lugones, 2007, 2008; see also Daltoé, 2020).

The feminicide of Indigenous women in Brazil is a product of the coloniality of gender and power — systems that have historically subjugated and rendered women, particularly nonwhite women, invisible (Mendes, 2022). Black and Indigenous feminists have long criticized hegemonic, Eurocentric feminism for its tendency to universalize women's experiences while ignoring the racial and colonial dimensions of structural oppression in the Global South (Mendes, 2022). Violence against Indigenous women is not merely interpersonal but also social

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and ethnic, rooted in the ongoing invasion and exploitation of territories and bodies (Mendes, 2022). Decolonial thinker María Lugones (2008) argues that the binary gender system was consolidated through the colonial project, imposing foreign models that dismantled preexisting relational structures within Indigenous worlds. Feminicide against Indigenous women—often rendered invisible by inadequate data and by a persistent colonial mentality of domination and war—thus manifests directly upon female bodies (Lugones, 2008; see also Daltoé, 2020).

The concept of necropolitics highlights very well this violent and tragic postcolonial consequences on Indigenous women and their bodies. Necropolitics is a political system that induces the killing of Black and Indigenous women. Pessoa; Nascimento (2022) note that in both Brazil and Mexico that there is a tendency for a specific type of race/ethnicity/skin color to be killed/murdered by femicide, with 68% of those killed by femicide are Black women in Brazil (according to 2020 Atlas of Violence) and 59% of women who suffer femicide in Mexico are Indigenous. They explain that the lack of specific public policies that induces the lack of State attention in both countries for these women who suffer the most, as they fail to protect them, configuring itself as a necropolitical action in that the State authorizes which bodies can be murdered: the bodies of Black women and indigenous women.

The analysis of necropolitics lines with the multidimensional concept of 'territorio-cuerpo-tierra' (territory-body-land) (Sabsay, 2025). Sabsay (2025) reconsider the coloniality of gender in light of trans- anti-colonial contributions and feminist and women's social movements' mobilization of the multidimensional concept of 'territorio-cuerpo-tierra'. This analysis is rooted in the decolonial turn within the social sciences and the humanities, and the theory of feminist scholar Lugones (2007) of bodies as territories. This notion is indebted to the multidimensional concept of body-land-territory (Cuerpo-Tierra-Territorio) produced by Indigenous and communitarian feminist activists of the Americas (Sabsay, 2025).

The gendered colonization of bodies manifests itself through the figure of bodies as territories contemporarily mobilized by feminists across the region (Sabsay, 2025). According to Sabsay (2025), Lugones' (2007) most important contributions to feminist philosophy and decolonial thought is this concept of the coloniality of gender that the author developed, built on Quijano and Ennis (2000) theory of the "coloniality of power", by reconceptualizing gender as a structuring device of coloniality and theorizes its co-constitutive relationship with race.

The articulation of 'Our Bodies, Our Territories' inspired by the Indigenous concept of territory-body-land underscores the continuum of violence also pointed out by Indigenous feminists at individual and collective levels (Sabsay, 2025). For individual bodies, this manifests as gender-based violence, feminicide and exploitation (Sabsay, 2025). As for collective bodies, this continuum materializes through environmental degradation, resource appropriation and territorial dispossession, where the attack on land parallels the violence against Indigenous communities' embodied existence (Sabsay, 2025).

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The scholar exposes how colonial genocidal structures have rendered Indigenous women illegible for protection under international human rights law. This explains with a feminist, decolonial framework why and how Indigenous women's experiences of socioeconomic marginalization, inadequate and unsafe housing, and the alarming rates of feminicidal and sexual gender-based violence continue to persist unabated. Therefore, in the context of Canada – but this could in the case of Indigenous femicide in Brazil as well – to Bourgeois (2023) femicide against Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) women and girls has played and continues to play the fundamental role in securing Canada's existence as a colonial nation-state.

Daltoé (2020) observes that in Brazil the criminal system is invariably a space of institutionalization of violence against Black and Indigenous bodies in this postcolonial space, in the context of Latin America countries where the social structures organizing both gender and prisons cannot be understood outside of the decolonial theorization, and the constructed hierarchies based on racialization.

In this context, the resistance of Indigenous peoples has emerged through movements led by Indigenous women — though not necessarily identifying as "Indigenous feminists," even if some do (Mendes, 2022). These movements confront violence, defend rights, and promote political agency, aligning themselves with feminist struggles while demarcating their specificities. Many of these movements define themselves as Indigenous women's movements, rather than feminist ones, emphasizing their autonomy from hegemonic feminist frameworks. For some, identifying as feminist can still evoke a perceived lack of sorority and representativeness regarding class and ethnic differences (Mendes, 2022).

To briefly connect this reality with that of Canada, the over-representation of Indigenous women among victims of homicide and disappearance is deeply rooted in the country's colonial history, marked by exploitation, racism and state control (García-Del Moral, 2020). Since European colonization, economic and territorial expansion has been sustained by the subjugation of Indigenous peoples, with Indigenous women particularly targeted through sexual violence, enslavement, and trafficking. In the 18th century, records indicate that Indigenous women were captured and traded to merchants to settle debts, inaugurating a pattern of sexual exploitation that persisted for generations (García-Del Moral, 2020).

Colonialism also created and perpetuated hypersexualized stereotypes of Indigenous women — portraying them alternately as "exotic" and available or as symbols of purity — images that served to legitimize sexual exploitation and human trafficking. Today, evidence suggests that many missing Indigenous women are victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation, often linked to routes of mineral and oil extraction, revealing a direct relationship between extractivism, gender violence, and colonial capitalism (García-Del Moral, 2020).

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Many scholars and activists perceive Indigenous femicide as the persistent consequence and continuation of colonization, in Brazil and Canada as well (Daltoé, 2020; Jangir, 2022; Bejarano, 2023; Flores; Alfaro, 2023; Grant, 2023; Bourgeois, 2023; Sutton, 2023; Ugalde, 2023; Staliano et *al*., 2023). Femicide is also a consequence of intersectionalities (Daltoé, 2020) generated and maintained by the global economic system of globalization (Ordorica, 2022) and neoliberalism in the continuity of colonial capitalism.

Indigenous women as well as Black women experience intersectionalities of race, gender, poverty. Intersectionality of poverty includes poor housing conditions, gender violence, gender violence generated by poor housing conditions. In Canada, historical and ongoing impacts of colonization, systemic racism, poverty, and other inequalities have contributed to Indigenous populations in general being overrepresented as victims of violent crime (Aujla et *al*., 2023).

Indigenous women are over-represented in several critical aspects of Canadian society: the prison system, prostitution, and ultimately as victims of domestic violence (Bush et al., 2014). Many Indigenous families are mostly poor and unemployed, the Indigenous women move to urban cities for employments and survival, where they are trapped into sex trafficking, are raped, or discriminated on the basis of their race in the workplace (Jangir, 2022). Canada's colonial legacy has forced Indigenous women and girls into dangerous and precarious social and economic conditions, which in turn has made them more vulnerable to different kinds of violence, sex trafficking. High rates of poverty, physical and sexual abuse, homelessness are some reasons why they fall into such traps (Bush et al., 2014). The less access to education, employment, and better medical and health facilities makes them vulnerable (Bush et al., 2014).

Brazil and Canada share a colonial heritage that persists and that mark both bodies and territories. Many scholars and activists fighting Indigenous femicide demand decoloniality – along with intersectionalities – as an approach to address this issue and the coloniality of gender (Daltoé, 2020; Staliano et *al*., 2023). The commitment to decoloniality, embodied in the resistance of Indigenous women, is essential to dismantling structures that, throughout history, have built economic and territorial progress upon subjugation, exploitation, and extermination. A decolonial perspective, therefore, is above all an opening toward other ways of thinking — toward epistemologies that resist, re-exist, and propose new possible worlds.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the answer to Indigenous femicide on the scene of global politics and in international relations has come from feminist movements, feminist scholars, transnational research, international organizations like UN and NGOs like Amnesty International, national and international law courts, Americas regional policies and Inter-American legal system. Indeed,

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there is a tremendous contribution to this global answer by the Americas regional policies and Inter-American legal system. The implication of these global answers is political and legal on the international scene. And as for Canada and Brazil it rests on the acknowledging of the specific crime that is femicide, on political and legal aspects, justice for the victim and gender inequality. The major contribution of the feminist movement in this answer by developing the concept of femicide, is the affirming of a State's obligations and responsibility in this issue. One of the results of this study is this question of Canada's late adhesion to the The Belém do Pará Convention, that opens possibilities for future research. Besides, our inquiry shows that the global situation of Indigenous femicide is still alarming. Indigenous femicide needs more visibility on the global scene and the prevalence of this alarming issue needs to be accurately assessed. Although some efforts have been made thanks to the contributions of the acknowledgement of the concept of femicide, the global politics answer to Indigenous femicide remain a weak answer due to the systemic structures of settler colonialism. Indeed, these global actions need to involve respectfully and efficiently local Indigenous communities, to take into account the perpetual colonial system that generates Indigenous femicide and integrate decolonial and intersectionality approaches.

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