



23 June 2020

Joint NGO statement following the adoption of HRC resolution on systemic racism and police violence following the Urgent Debate - delivered at the conclusion of 43rd session of the HRC

The Human Rights Council failed to set up a commission of inquiry with a specific focus on the United States of America last week. This impedes genuine justice and accountability at the international level for systemic racism and police violence in the US, in the West, and elsewhere.

We appreciate those governments from Africa, and elsewhere, who shed light on the U.S. and Western governments for failing to protect Black people from systemic racism and police violence, and who sought to support those fighting racism on the front lines.

We mark the extraordinary fact that an urgent debate discussing these issues was held, and that the voices of victims' families resonated and were a central part of the debate over the past week, as Philonise Floyd's moving statement via video was included at the debate's very outset. We also welcome the strong original resolution presented by the African Group. Some of the Council's member States took a critical step toward elevating the voices and views of those most effective by human rights violations - this must become the norm, not the exception.

This failure to advance an international investigation is not theirs. It is a reflection of the selectivity and double standards displayed by many States, particularly Western States, in failing to apply the objective criteria to which they have committed, in relation to one of their own. In doing so, they are complicit in maintaining and perpetuating entrenched systems of racism and white supremacy.

Shifting the resolution from being specific to the U.S. to being generic has served to subvert the debate into an "all lives matter" discussion which has rendered invisible those who needed to be at the very centre of the Council's action.

The situation in the United States fulfils many of the objective criteria that many States in this room have pledged to apply in determining how the Council can take action on a country situation.

- The High Commissioner, Special Procedures and Treaty Bodies have raised the alarm over the situation in the US and even issued early warning signals.
- There are widespread credible reports and video evidence of targeted attacks against peaceful protestors, journalists, and human rights defenders;
- The violations are gross, widespread and systematic, targeting one group in particular;
- Domestic remedies and mechanisms have been overwhelmingly inadequate in addressing the systematic and structural basis of the violations.

Nevertheless, we consider that a report of the High Commissioner on systemic racism, police brutality and violence against peaceful protestors, to be prepared with Special Procedures, could provide a useful opportunity for continued advocacy for meaningful change. We call on all States, including the US, to ensure the Office has the resources it needs for this mandate, and to engage in good faith with this process report, with genuine self-reflection and commitment towards change.

It is worth remembering the urgent debate manifested the struggles taking place today, bringing the sense of urgency from the streets of Minneapolis into the Palais des Nations in Geneva. It connected directly with the social movements and global outrage that Black and minority communities are experiencing.

The Black Lives Matter movement has been a rallying call for movements across the globe experiencing oppression and brutality. The solidarity expressed by civil society across various contexts led to strong support to address systemic racism in the U.S.

This urgent debate has only re-energised us to work tirelessly at all levels until the Council meaningfully addresses the historic systemic racism and oppression faced by people of African descent in the U.S. and the rest of the world. To do so, it must ensure that:

- Facts and circumstances of systemic violations are established, through an independent investigation, of systemic racism in law enforcement in the U.S. and elsewhere;
- Impartial mechanisms and processes for truth, justice and accountability exist and are effective,
- Measures for prevention and guarantees of non-recurrence of future violations are put in place.

Signatories:

1. International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
2. American Civil Liberties Union
3. East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project
4. Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
5. International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA-World)
6. Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales
7. Center for Reproductive Rights
8. CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
9. Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies