

## **[HRC45 | UN High Commissioner stresses urgent collective duty to address systemic racism and police brutality](#)**

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**The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights gave her first oral update on systemic racism and police violence against Africans and people of African descent. ISHR delivered and supported statements demanding inclusive outreach to communities of colour and the creation of meaningful, safe, and accessible opportunities for consultation.**



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During the debate, ISHR [delivered a statement](#) on behalf of [Collectif Urgence notre police assassine](#), regretting that no [commission of inquiry](#) was established by the Council in the United States and elsewhere due to [enormous diplomatic pressure](#) from the United States and other allied countries. Nevertheless, ISHR and Collectif Urgence notre police assassine highlighted the critical opportunity the report provides<sup>[1]</sup>. They called on the High Commissioner to centre the report on the experiences and contributions of victims and their families, as well as those of defenders and civil society working on police violence and systemic racism. ISHR also [joined a statement](#) by the American Civil Liberties Union based on a [call made to the High Commissioner by 144 families of victims of police violence and over 360 civil society organisations](#).

ISHR appreciates the High Commissioner's response to the calls, where she [affirmed to the Council](#) that the report will reflect and amplify the voices of victims of people of African descent, their families and communities. She affirmed that the report will examine the root causes that have enabled systemic racism and police violence. She also voiced her appreciation for the support of civil society and highlighted their indispensable role.

ISHR also appreciates Botswana's [statement](#) which emphasised that countless families of victims of racism are looking to the Council to address the historical and systemic violations that they have experienced, which are often unchecked and never discussed nor acted upon.

The High Commissioner reaffirmed that the absence of accountability and redress for racially motivated police violence against people of African descent is unacceptable. She told the Council that her Office continues to receive reports of police brutality and racism against people of African descent, however :

'Often it appears that investigations are opened only when video footage shared on social media creates a wave of public outrage placing heavy pressure on the authorities to act.'

The High Commissioner stressed the essential role of States to renew their efforts to break the cycle of brutality and injustices that generations of people of African descent have endured. She concluded with a plea, urging the Council to make this critical moment a turning point in the respect and protection of the human rights of people of African descent.

She announced that the preparation of the report is under way, including with the assistance of Special Procedures, and that she will provide further information during the next Council session in March 2021. Read the full statement by the High Commissioner [here](#).

Watch the joint statement of Collectif Urgence notre police assassine and ISHR here:

*Photo: Commons Wikipedia*

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[1] The report was [mandated](#) by the Council on 19 June 2020, following an urgent debate initiated by the African Group 'on current racially inspired human rights violations, systemic racism, police brutality and violence against peaceful protests.' It mandated the High Commissioner, with the assistance of relevant Special Mandate Holders, 'to prepare a report on systemic racism, violations of international human rights law against Africans and people of African descent by law enforcement agencies, especially those incidents that resulted in the death of George Floyd and other Africans and of people of African descent, to contribute to accountability and redress for victims.' The resolution has also requested the High Commissioner to 'examine government responses to antiracism peaceful process peaceful protests, including the alleged use of excessive force against protesters, bystanders and journalists.' In addition, the resolution also requested that the High Commissioner 'include updates on police brutality against Africans and people of African descent in all her oral updates to the Council.'

ISHR