

HRC45 | France must guarantee accountability for extrajudicial killing of people of African descent

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The UN Working Group on People of African Descent shed light on impunity for police violence against people of African descent. Comité Adama and ISHR demanded an end to racially motivated police violence in France, which is a candidate for election to the UN Human Rights Council for 2021.



Comité Adama, supported by ISHR, [urged](#) France to put an end to police violence and to ensure that anti-racism defenders can carry out their work without hindrance. They also called on France to ensure transparent and thorough investigations and stressed that this would be the minimum for a State seeking membership of the Council.

They recalled that it has been four years of judicial proceedings and still no justice for the family of Adama Traoré, who was killed by the police, with the Working Group taking up his case in 2017. They also highlighted that violations affect not only victims of police violence but also peaceful protesters who defend them, and extending far beyond the demonstrations, affect defenders in their private lives, through unfounded prosecutions and intimidation.

They asked the Working Group what role can the Council play to hold France accountable for racially motivated police violence. The Working Group responded that they had sought for a longtime to visit France and stressed the importance of country visits to elevate and make visible these issues. ISHR urges France to grant unhindered access to the Working Group, without delay.

The Working Group urged the Council and States to take clear and unequivocal steps to end impunity and tackle the root causes of systemic racism. They reiterated their calls to States to implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, embrace the International Decade of People of African Descent and operationalise the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent.

The Working Group will provide its expertise to the High Commissioner in preparing the [report](#) on systemic racism, police violence against Africans and people of African descent, and government responses to anti-racism protests.

The Working Group presented its [annual report](#). Amongst the key issues they raised:

- Racial injustice and racial discrimination remain so deeply entrenched that police impunity, racial harassment, and extrajudicial killings of Black people continue.
- A prime example of impunity is that the legal process said to exonerate the police officers who killed Breonna Taylor actually failed to even *consider* criminal charges for the gunshots resulting in her death.
- Popular protests, uprisings and resistance show the urgency for action to meet demands for respect, recognition, justice and social protection.
- Racial discrimination cannot be mitigated by ignoring race and assuming that the legacy mind-sets of colonialism and the trade and trafficking in enslaved Africans no longer exist; these mindsets indeed remain in the habits and beliefs of our contemporary society.
- Persistent racial injustice is still met by denials or justifications by people with the power to solve them.
- Failures to find lasting solutions to end systemic racism is due to the design of the systems that reflect our global understandings and our global economy; as they were developed hand-in-hand with white supremacy and anti-Black racism.
- In order to dismantle systemic racism, States must measure outcomes by centring community experiences of people of African descent as the proper metric of whether interventions are effective. The International Decade for People of African Descent provides an opportunity to convene discussions, develop programmes

that promote both opportunity and redress.

- Most States *still* fail to consider social determinants of health. Failure to appreciate the risks faced by Afro-descendent populations has facilitated racial disparities in the pandemic.
- The lack of disaggregated data on people of African descent, explaining that the failure to keep disaggregated data conceals violations and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic: *'If you don't count us, we don't count'*.
- Although people of African descent disproportionately experienced COVID-19 infections and mortality, law enforcement failed to offer protection. Instead, they targeted people of African descent violently and with impunity in enforcing COVID-restrictions.
- In order to mitigate impact of COVID-19, States must eliminate racial bias including recognising leadership by African States' COVID-19 responses.
- The role of the tech industry in perpetuating racial bias in algorithms; e.g. a health algorithm in the United States prescribed less courses of treatment for Black patients. The Working Group urged the tech industry to dismantle, examine and interrogate racial bias and systemic racism in their tools.

The Working Group also presented their country visit reports to Ecuador and Peru.

Watch the joint statement by Comité Adama and ISHR :

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