

[HRC46 | UN High Commissioner to HRC: Listen to people of African descent, victims and their families](#)

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The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights gave her second update to the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) on 19 March 2021. She reaffirmed that she will center the lived experiences of victims and their families, emphasised the necessity for the HRC to continue addressing systemic racism, and warned that without addressing the root causes, impunity for racist police violence will prevail.



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In her [second oral update to the HRC](#) on the implementation of HRC [Resolution 43/1](#), which was adopted following the [historic urgent debate in June 2020](#), the High Commissioner [reiterated](#) that she will put the experiences of people of African descent, particularly victims and their families, at the centre of her work in the issue. During the same debate, over 150 States [jointly welcomed](#) that the implementation of HRC [Resolution 43/1](#) will centre victims and their families.

The High Commissioner highlighted that she has met personally with a number of family members of women, men and children of African descent killed by law enforcement officials, and that they reported similar difficulties in their interactions with police and judicial authorities in their struggles to achieve justice.

“So many cases involving deaths of people of African descent never make it to court, and the pain of so many families goes unacknowledged or even denied”, said the High Commissioner.

ISHR, Comité Adama, association « A Qui Le Tour ? » and [Mike Ben Peter's](#) family had submitted a [joint report](#) to the High Commissioner to draw her attention to cases of police brutality that caused the deaths of 2 Black men in France and Switzerland, and highlighted the racially charged police violence and the judicial irregularities which usually surround them.

The High Commissioner also stated that “some family members and victims have also shared with us serious allegations of intimidation and harassment”.

During the same debate, ISHR and its French national partner, the Collectif Urgence Notre Police Assassine, [delivered a joint statement](#) calling on France to support the work of defenders working on the issues of racism and police violence, to refrain from criminalising them, and not to deprive them of their main working tool, namely the possibility to [film when they witness police violence](#).

The High Commissioner warned that “impunity for violence by police and other law enforcement officials against people of African descent does not exist in a vacuum” and that “unless we address the systemic racism within all our institutions”, endeavours to end impunity for police violence will not be successful.

“We must understand the roots of today’s inequalities and the unacknowledged and unredressed racism upon which they have grown. We must address the legacies of enslavement, the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans, and its context of colonialism”, added the High Commissioner.

“As the High Commissioner rightly stated, addressing systemic racism should continue to be a priority for this Council”, said Salma El Hosseiny, ISHR’s Human Rights Council Programme Manager.

The High Commissioner is expected to present her report to the HRC in June which will “recommend an

agenda for transformative change to dismantle systemic racism and police brutality against Africans and people of African descent, and to advance accountability and redress for victims”.

ISHR urges the HRC to respond to the High Commissioner’s calls. The Council should answer to the [demands of victims’ families and those of civil society](#) and establish an independent inquiry to investigate systemic racism in law enforcement in the United States and a thematic commission of inquiry to investigate systemic racism in law enforcement globally, especially where it is related to legacies of colonialism and transatlantic slavery, as called for by [UN Special Procedures](#).

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