



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
30 September 2020

English only

---

## Human Rights Council

### Forty-fifth session

14 September–2 October 2020

Agenda item 9

**Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, follow-up and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action**

**Joint written statement\* submitted by International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, International-Lawyers.Org, Union of Arab Jurists, United Towns Agency for North-South Cooperation, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status, International Educational Development, Inc., World Peace Council, non-governmental organizations on the roster**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[20 August 2020]

---

\* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

GE.20-12778(E)



\* 2 0 1 2 7 7 8 \*

Please recycle 



# The Fight Against Discrimination Is Far From Over

## Introduction

The authors of this written statement draw attention to the concerning trends in the global rise in racism and racial discrimination.

The fight against racism and discrimination is far from over. In recent years, there has been a rise in hate speech and discrimination around the world. Far-right politicians and groups have capitalized off their racist agendas, convincing the masses to adopt a similar mindset. Hate speech and racial discrimination are slowly becoming normalized, elevating white supremacy and tolerance for anti-migration sentiment.

States must be reminded of the international treaties that require them to prevent this type of discriminatory behavior. In 1963, the United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination was adopted by the General Assembly. It calls on States to make serious efforts to consistently condemn racism and promote tolerance. In 1965, the United Nations adopted the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD). This legally binding document commits its signatories to the elimination of racial discrimination and the promotion of understanding among all races. States are required to outlaw hate speech and criminalize involvement in racist organizations. In 2001, the United Nations adopted the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA), which provides recommendations and practical measures for the international community to tackle racial discrimination as a global concern.

## Country Examples

### Australia

The One Nation Party, founded in Australia in 1997, is openly anti-immigration, anti-multiculturalism, anti-Chinese, and anti-Islam. Although such parties receive media attention, they lack electoral support and success stories within the political realm. Nonetheless, they are a concern and Australia must hold accountable all politicians and citizens who propagate hate speech.

Some political parties in Australia continue to feed off of people's hatred and fear of multiculturalism, backing their claims with myths that migrants steal jobs and erase national culture. In 2019, ten parties in Australia's federal election were listed as openly Islamophobic in order to better identify with public sentiment. This is problematic as it encourages racist statements and attacks against Muslims to become normalized and in regards to politics, it has even been made respectable.

### Hungary

In 2015, a refugee crisis, also known as the European migrant crisis, began in which refugees coming from the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq, and Afghanistan entered the European Union (EU). In 2018, Hungary refused to take part in the EU's resettlement programme. In March 2020, the European Court of Justice ruled that Hungary, Poland, and Czechia violated their obligation to take in their fair share of asylum seekers during the refugee crisis. Far-right politicians used the refugee crisis as an opportunity to project anti-immigration standpoints and gain conservative followers.

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán went as far as to say he would get around the European Union's program to keep Europe "Christian", as many of the refugees were coming from Africa and the Middle East. Stating that "multiculturalism is only an illusion," Orbán does not believe Christian and Muslim communities will ever get along.<sup>1</sup> Not only is this against the

---

<sup>1</sup> Agerholm, Harriet (2018, January 09). Refugees are 'Muslim invaders', says Hungarian PM Viktor Orbán. Retrieved August 08, 2020, from <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/refugees-muslim-invaders-hungary-viktor-orban-racism-islamophobia-eu-a8149251.html>.

Hungarian Constitution, but diversity is embedded into the principles of the EU and the UN, both of which Hungary is a part of.

Far-right parties are aligned with the government, sharing a similar conservative mindset, which suggests that racism thrives if the political environment and infrastructures are conducive. It also reveals government's complicity in advancing racism, leading to recurring violence and impunity.

### **Germany**

In recent years, Germany has seen an intense rise of racist and neo-Nazi behavior. Some demonstrations are even taking place in former concentration camps by challenging the tour guides with holocaust denial, taking selfies in front of crematories, and displaying the Hitler salute. In 2019, the government banned three different far-right groups who brand themselves as followers of Adolf Hitler, plan and carry out attacks to murder government officials and those of Jewish descent, and distribute racist and anti-Semitic writing.

With racial discrimination increasing significantly in Germany, the state of Berlin passed the first anti-discrimination law in June 2020. This allows citizens to file complaints and claim damages and compensation if they feel public authorities have discriminated against them. This is a step in the right direction, but simultaneously signals that Germany as a whole has a long way to go.

### **Italy**

In 2019, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reported complaints and increases in incidents of racism, racial discrimination, and xenophobia against migrants, immigrants, and minorities such as Roma and blacks in Italy. It further called for government officials to be held accountable as their platforms spread hate speech at a national level. Similarly, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has recommended that Italy work harder to hold accountable anyone, including government officials, for spreading ideas based on racial superiority or hatred. Political manipulation allows citizens to think politicians are defending their national identity and protecting their security, making racial discrimination a socially acceptable practice.

In 2018, Matteo Salvini, Deputy Prime Minister of Italy during the time, refused rescue teams to help migrants crossing the Mediterranean. The United Nations called out the Italian government for refusing rescue ships to enter Italy and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, announced she would send investigators to Italy to check the reports of racism and violence against migrants. Salvini, in return, threatened to cut funding to the United Nations, even though country visits are a normal procedure within the United Nations.

### **Iraq**

Discrimination runs rampant in Iraq and is systemic and institutionalized through the sectarian system of government that was created by the United States of America after the invasion of 2003. Minority groups are discriminated based on their ethnicity and their religious beliefs. The systemic corruption in the Iraqi government and the ongoing human rights violations fuel the discrimination and unfair practices, as powerful militia leaders seek to retain power and influence by suppressing others. This includes discrimination in all areas including in government jobs, services, protection, etc.

On 1 October 2019, protests began in Iraq calling for the dismantling of the sectarian system of government and demanding accountability. These peaceful protests have been met with violence, including assassinations and enforced disappearances.

### **Observations**

The examples included in this statement merely scratch the surface of discriminatory and racist behavior that is on the rise. Racism has become a disease our world has failed to eradicate and until all countries uphold their duty to fight against racial discrimination in all

its forms, racism will continue to thrive. Politicians too often foster the xenophobic climate by blaming immigrants for any increasing crime rate and identity loss, despite evidence depicting no correlation. Racist discourse in politics is feeding into the public's fear of migrants and the rejection of minorities within their society. Australia, Hungary, Germany, Italy, and Iraq, as well as all Member States, must uphold the articles expressed in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, implement the DDPA, and work continuously to combat all forms of racial discrimination.

Despite world progress in multiculturalism and globalization, discrimination in all forms continues to persist. All Member States must accede to and uphold the ICERD and the DDPA. States must hold accountable anyone that is involved in discriminatory behavior. Government officials and politicians, in particular, have an enormous public platform and influence over citizens and it is extremely important for stricter laws and regulations to be implemented so everyone can be held accountable. Further, we call on all States to criminalize organizations that spread and promote racial superiority and intolerance. In order to respect the dignity of every human being, citizens must not only be held accountable for hate speech and discriminatory actions, but reparations must be provided to all victims.

## **Recommendations**

We call on the UN Human Rights Council to:

- Urge all UN Member States to combat racial discrimination by repealing all laws and practices that propagate racism and proclaiming all perpetrators of racial discrimination to be held accountable.
- Urge UN Member States to continue to criminalize groups who preach racial superiority and hold perpetrators accountable for hate speech and discriminatory practices.
- Provide tangible steps for how States can hold hate speech to account when advocated by politicians and government officials.
- Continue to call out and condemn racism in all its forms, as racial discrimination and racial superiority are direct threats to the principles of equality and human dignity.
- Encourage the international community to speak up against racism and act against hate speech and discrimination in order to uphold human rights equally for all individuals.
- Emphasize the importance for all Member States to implement the DDPA and promote the commemoration of its 20th anniversary in 2021.

---

Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ), Just Atonement Inc., The Arab Lawyers Association-UK, Human Rights Defenders (HRD), The Brussels Tribunal, The Iraqi Commission for Human Rights (ICHR), Association of Humanitarian Lawyers (AHL), Association of Human Rights Defenders in Iraq (AHRD), General Federation of Iraqi Women (GFIW), Organisation for Justice & Democracy in Iraq (OJDI), The Iraqi Centre for Human Rights, NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.