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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 Charitable Institute for Protecting Social Victims, The, Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status

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

[24 May 2021]

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



Racism and Islamophobia in the United States of America

Racism against various ethnic or minority groups has existed in the United States since the colonial era. African Americans, in particular, have faced restrictions on their political, social, and economic freedoms throughout much of United States history. It is still a problem for the world's most powerful country. In addition to African Americans, ethnic and religious minorities, such as American Indians and Muslims also suffer from racist and xenophobic policies and approaches in the United States. Islamophobia that indicates illogical fear, prejudgment and prejudice towards Muslims is prevalent in the United States both among the public and the State leaders.

A. Racism

According to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, racial discrimination is a threat to international peace and security and states have the obligation to eliminate discrimination. Yet we witness a great failure for the US to fulfill its commitment.

We can see racism prevalent in the society and in the rhetoric of some political figures that lead to prejudice, hatred and violence. That along with historic systemic racism creates extra violations to human rights. According to a book released by Cohen, the former attorney of Donald Trump, he routinely referred to Black leaders of foreign nations with racial insults and he was consumed with hatred for his previous counterpart, Barack Obama.¹ Cohen in the book explained that “as a rule, Trump expressed low opinions of all Black folks, from music to culture and politics”

The brutal murder of George Floyd shocked the quarantined nation under COVID-19. For nearly 9 minutes, an officer kept his knee on the neck while Floyd said what we have heard before, “I can't breathe.” People went into the streets and for the first time, hundreds of thousands of people in every city and state, people of all ethnic backgrounds, protested against the incident.

These incidents illustrate a pattern of prejudice toward people of color riding the American society. The police provoked fear and violence. According to a recent report, the systematic killing and maiming of unarmed African Americans by police amount to crimes against humanity and should be investigated and prosecuted under international law.² The findings report an “alarming national pattern of disproportionate use of deadly force not only by firearms but also by Tasers” against Black people and operating a “culture of impunity” in which police officers are rarely held accountable while their crimes are considered as those of just “a few bad apples”.

Racial bias continues in all stages of criminal proceedings. African Americans are more likely than white Americans to be arrested; once arrested, they are more likely to be convicted; and once convicted, and they are more likely to experience lengthy prison sentences.³

B. Islamophobia

In the country, Islamophobic hate crimes increase following events beyond the control of Muslims, including terrorist attacks and anniversaries of such attacks- where the perpetrators are identified as Muslims or claim to be Muslims.

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/06/us/politics/cohen-book-trump.html>.

² <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/apr/26/us-police-killings-black-americans-crimes-against-humanity>.

³ <https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/un-report-on-racial-disparities>.

In the current political environment, anti-Muslim bigotry and Islamophobia have become pervasive features of American public life. Both in the language of politicians and the media, it is common to see and hear negative messaging about Muslims.⁴

A Pew Research Center study reported a majority of US adults (82%) agree that Muslims are subject to at least some form of discrimination in America.⁵ While white supremacist violence is responsible for the most cases of domestic terrorism in the United States⁶ and was responsible for 67 percent of terrorist plots and attacks in 2020.⁷

According to 2021 report⁸ of the special rapporteur on the freedom of religion and belief on anti-Muslim hatred, the US disproportionately applies its “Controlled Application Review and Resolution Program” (“CARRP”), a largely secretive extreme vetting process for immigrants perceived to be a threat to national security, to immigrants from Arab, Middle-Eastern and South-Asian countries or with such ethnicities with the result that significant number of applications from Muslim persons are indefinitely postponed or denied without proper notice, justification or the possibility to appeal.

The report also states that Muslim students are almost twice as likely to face religious-based bullying as children of other religious identities in the US.

C. Recommendations

We request the US government to take effective measures to review policies at the federal, state and local levels with a view to preventing racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance toward Muslims.

We strongly call on the US to combat racism and hate speech against people of color and religious minorities to reinforce their protection. Especially by urgent actions to end police brutality against black people and bring those responsible for racially motivated violence to justice.

We call on the United States to pay due attention to the concerns expressed by human right groups while making amendments to domestic laws.

Being seriously concerned about the on-going hatred and discrimination against Muslims, we call on the US government to root out Islamophobia, address widespread hatred and combat discrimination against Muslims.

We urge NGOs in the United States to study ways of convincing the decision makers to move toward social inclusion of minorities specially Muslims.

We call on the US should take meaningful and demonstrable steps to end Islamophobia and hate speech in media and public speeches.

⁴ <http://www.islamophobia.org>.

⁵ https://www.fairobserver.com/region/north_america/kourosh-ziabari-arun-kundnani-islamophobia-america-anti-muslim-attacks-trump-travel-ban-world-news-37917.

⁶ <https://www.thedailybeast.com/fbi-sits-on-report-detailing-white-supremacist-terror-threat>.

⁷ https://csiswebsiteprod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fspublic/publication/201021_Jones_War_Comes_Home_v2.pdf.

⁸ <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/47/25>.