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Balthazar I. Beckett

American University in Cairo, balthazar.beckett@aucegypt.edu

Salimah K. Hankins

US Human Rights Network, shankins@ushrnetwork.org

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# “Until We Are First Recognized as Humans”: The Killing of George Floyd and the Case for Black Life at the United Nations

Balthazar I. Beckett\*  
The American University in Cairo

Salimah K. Hankins, Esq.\*\*  
US Human Rights Network

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\* **Balthazar I. Beckett** is Assistant Professor with the American University in Cairo (AUC). He holds a PhD from the City University of New York, Graduate Center, and his work has appeared in *Callaloo: A Journal of African Diaspora Arts and Letters*, *South Atlantic Review*, *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, *Poverty and Race*, *Kritikon Litterarum*, *African American National Biography*, and *Dictionary of Caribbean and Afro-Latin American Biography*, and elsewhere. He has documented human rights issues in many places, including at the United Nations in Geneva; the uprisings in Ferguson, Missouri; anti-eviction vigils in the San Francisco Bay Area; and the protests at Standing Rock. He is currently organizing a conference on Literature and Human Rights in Cairo. [balthazar.beckett@aucegypt.edu](mailto:balthazar.beckett@aucegypt.edu)

\*\* **Salimah K. Hankins, Esq.** is the Interim Executive Director of the US Human Rights Network (USHRN). Before this, Salimah organized the civil society side of the U.S government review before the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in Geneva, Switzerland in 2014 and has produced six annual human rights reports for USHRN. Salimah began her legal career as an associate at the ACLU of Maryland. Most recently, she served as Senior Staff Attorney for Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto, CA. While there, she worked on anti-gentrification and displacement issues and worked with community groups to secure a \$20 million settlement from Facebook which created an affordable housing fund worth \$75 million. [shankins@ushrnetwork.org](mailto:shankins@ushrnetwork.org)

Following the brutal killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 25, 2020, members of the human rights movement in the United States understood instantly that justice within the American legal system, which has a long history of shielding police officers and racist vigilantes from prosecution, was anything but certain. To enhance the chances of having the individual officers (Derek Chauvin, J. Alexander Kueng, Thomas Lane, and Tou Thao) prosecuted for Floyd's death, but also to have demands for systemic change heard and amplified, the United States Human Rights Network (USHRN) and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) worked with the families of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Michael Brown, and others to set in motion a process that gained the support of domestic and international human rights organizations; international human rights bodies, such as the African Group/Group of African States (GAFS), consisting of fifty-four African nations; and, finally, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) itself. In fact, the urgent debate held at the United Nations in Geneva in June 2020 marked an unprecedented moment in the institution's long history. This was the first time that a Western country had been held accountable, at this level, for flagrant human rights violations occurring within their borders and at the hands of their government.

But movements, as Jacqueline Dow Hall (2005) reminds us, have long histories, and it usually takes generations of activists to build organizations and processes that result in such achievements. Resolution A/HRC/RES/43/1 is no exception to this. To fully appreciate how this milestone was made possible, it is necessary to study the genealogies of some of the key institutions and historical forces that were instrumental in this process, such as the decades-long Black internationalist grassroots organizing embodied by USHRN. What once began with a series of "kitchen table" talks came to establish processes that routinely enable those affected by racism and structural inequality in the United States to appeal to the United Nations, a process that activists—especially African Americans—had aspired to since the foundation of the League of Nations (LON) in 1920. A close reading of Resolution A/HRC/RES/43/1 not only reveals these long-standing efforts to allow African American victims of oppression to seek

redress in Geneva, but also time-honored connections between these United States-based activists and Pan-African organizations abroad, such as the African Group and its parent organization, the African Union (AU).

It is thus no coincidence that the June 2020 resolution explicitly references the pivotal July 1964 convening of the African Union's predecessor, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), in Cairo, Egypt. In so doing, the recent resolution beckons us to acknowledge the lasting legacy of mid-century Black internationalist thinkers—and especially of Malcolm X (el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz), whose advocacy on behalf of African Americans at that very meeting of the OAU in Cairo was crucial to the convening's then and now historic resolution on racial discrimination in the United States. In other words, Malcolm's words to African Heads of State in 1964 and the spirit that informed them still echo powerfully today—both in the recent testimonies of families of victims of police and in the long overdue acknowledgement of these crimes by the United Nations. “You in the United Nations are your brothers and sisters’ keepers in America,” George Floyd’s brother testified in front of the United Nations in June of 2020, echoing Malcolm X’s appeal to the OAU 56 years earlier, where he proclaimed that “you are the shepherd of all African peoples everywhere” (Malcolm X, 1965, as cited in Breitman, 1990, p. 73). From W.E.B. Du Bois’ Pan-African Congress to Malcolm’s Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU) to today’s efforts by organization like USHRN, from the League of Nations to the United Nations, from the OAU to the AU: Resolution A/HRC/RES/43/1 had been over a century in the making.

### **From Kitchen Tables to Geneva: A Brief History of the United States Human Rights Network**

The evolution of the United States Human Rights Network (USHRN), which played a central role in sending out a call to international partners to bring George Floyd’s case to the United Nations, offers an excellent example for the decades-long organization-building work that activists and advocates have dedicated themselves to—and is thus worth studying closely. A network, firmly rooted in the U.S. South, of more than

three hundred grassroots and advocacy-based organizations, USHRN uses a member-centered community organizing approach to bring attention to those most impacted by human rights violations in the United States, particularly Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQIA+) communities, people with disabilities, immigrants, and the poor. Though the roots of the organization reach back far, connecting to what Jacqueline Dowd Hall (2005) has labeled “the long civil rights movement” (p. 1233) and what Michael West and William Martin have identified as century-old “contours of the Black international” (2009, p. 1), the 1995 United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing, where prominent American figures proclaimed that “women’s rights are human rights” (Chozick, 2015), is considered a seminal moment in the network’s genealogy. After attending the conference, women from across the United States created their own organizing spaces, by beginning to have “kitchen table” conversations around the country. Led predominantly by women of color, the conversations were aimed at leveraging and expanding the existing domestic human rights advocacy in the United States. Up until then, this discourse was primarily centered on (1) issues of sovereignty and self-determination in Indigenous communities; (2) abolition of the death penalty; and (3) Black communities who had transitioned away from a human rights platform towards a civil rights platform due to external pressures. At the time, there was no multi-issue, intersectional grassroots movement to demand human rights accountability in the United States. Connecting southern, feminist approaches to discourses of universal human rights, advocates aimed at making a case that women’s rights are human rights and to show that human rights are relevant in the United States (Thomas & Dharmaraj, 2000).

These “kitchen table” talks were a precursor to the formation of the United States Human Rights Network. The first broad-based meeting of women from across the country who were human rights experts occurred in the summer of 1999 in Mill Valley, California, just north of San Francisco. Twenty-two women, mostly women of color, gathered to employ an intersectional and explicitly feminist approach to human rights at a time

when such efforts were dismissed as fringe “women’s issues” (Thomas & Dharmaraj, 2000). The goal was to put those most impacted by human rights abuses at the forefront of the movement in order to effect local policy changes. What came out of those meetings was an agenda that focused on: (1) showing that human rights are relevant in the United States, (2) increasing the visibility of marginalized groups, and (3) securing funding to further the movement work. With this agenda, several priorities emerged. The strategic approach looked at focus areas which included: (1) increasing education and awareness of human rights issues, (2) providing human rights trainings, (3) engaging in human rights advocacy, (4) strategic litigation, and (5) academic scholarship (Thomas & Dharmaraj, 2000). By the year 2000, after the first “kitchen table” talks and the Mill Valley convening, more people—including people of all genders, non-human rights experts, and those working on a variety of other issues—were utilizing a human rights framework to address local issues, including (1) mass incarceration, (2) gender-based violence, (3) reproductive rights, and (4) economic justice (Dharmaraj, 2019). Much of this early work was also in response to the increasing misogyny, racism, xenophobia, homophobia, and other forms of intolerance that were gaining traction in state houses across the United States at the close of the twentieth century. Among other backlashes, the 1990s had seen the passage of “welfare reform,” the “crime bill,” and draconian immigration bills (ASPE, 1996). In California, Proposition 209 banned Affirmative Action programs, while Proposition 187, an anti-immigrant bill, rendered undocumented immigrants ineligible for public benefits.

Following that initial meeting, the group sent 36 women to the “World Conference against Racism” (WCAR), held in Durban, South Africa, in Fall 2001 (see GANHRI, 2001), where they argued that the fact that the United States did not have a national human rights agenda—something that continues to this day—was a key problem. The work of the group after Durban was to expand the movement to be a more inclusive space; this resulted in more men, people of color, queer people, people with disabilities, and other groups entering into the domestic human rights movement space (Dharmaraj, 2019). A second key gathering, the United

States Human Rights Leadership Summit, “Ending Exceptionalism: Strengthening Human Rights in the United States,” held in July 2002 at Howard University Law School and organized by the group that organized the “kitchen table” conversations, brought together leading activists from a variety of different disciplines and issue areas to assess human rights work in the United States and identify ways to strengthen the domestic human rights agenda. The Summit broke new ground, fostering dialogue and strategic thinking across issue areas as well as sectors of work. Summit participants agreed that a “network” would be the most useful way to enable a broad array of organizations and individuals to work collaboratively to strengthen human rights efforts in the United States. These women of color, feminists, and human rights activists envisioned a grassroots movement that demanded human rights accountability in the United States, led by those most impacted by human rights violations and those who have been traditionally marginalized and excluded from the debate.

The United States Human Rights Network (USHRN) officially formed in 2003 after a series of meetings involving more than 60 of the most prominent and influential human rights and social justice activists in the United States. Since then, the network has served as an anchor to build the collective power of communities across the country and to expand the base of a bold, vibrant, and broad-based people-centered human rights movement. Over the years, USHRN has established itself as a space for groups to come together, share, learn and act towards realizing human rights in the United States. That said, the network’s efforts were met by resistance. After some progress in terms of its commitment to human rights, the United States was poised to start a period of horrific backsliding in its commitment to human rights, from the careful effort to undermine rights in the pursuit of power under the George W. Bush administration (see Frederici, 2010), to the shaky and mixed human rights legacy of the Obama years, and the outright disdain for international human rights displayed by the administration under Donald J. Trump (see LCCHR, 2019).

Currently, USHRN is national movement based in Atlanta, Georgia, and is made up of more than 300 member and partner organizations

working on multiple human rights issues and is led by people most directly impacted by human rights violations; comprised primarily of grassroots and community-based groups and individuals working collectively across issue areas. Importantly, USHRN works to engage, build the capacity and leadership, and foreground the voices and experiences of marginalized people in its efforts to build and grow a human rights movement. It does this by: (1) engaging, connecting and mobilizing communities across issue areas, constituencies, and regions to uphold and defend human rights; (2) building the capacity and leadership of grassroots groups and individuals to effectively apply the human rights framework in developing strategy and making long-term structural shifts to achieve justice; (3) raising the visibility of local human rights concerns and activism to shape public discourse locally, nationally, and internationally; and (4) facilitating effective collective action to secure human rights. These strategies are aimed at strengthening the national infrastructure to build and grow a people-centered human rights movement in the United States for advancing the human rights of marginalized people and Peoples.

### **“It’s Like the Wild Wild West”: Making the Case for Black Life in Geneva**

Importantly, today USHRN is the primary organization coordinating the participation of social justice and human rights groups in using the international human rights mechanisms, primarily with the United Nations, to hold the United States government accountable. USHRN has special “Consultative Status” to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). This is the highest status granted by the United Nations to non-governmental organizations (NGOs), thereby allowing them to participate in the work of the United Nations and paving the way for impacted people to directly advocate before U.N. bodies (see ECOSOC, 2020). USHRN primarily does this by coordinating U.S. civil society’s participation in periodic reviews for the U.N. treaties that the U.S. Government has ratified. The reviews of the United States’ compliance of its human rights obligations provide a unique opportunity for advocates to hold the U.S.



government accountable on a world stage. These reviews, including the preparatory and follow-up phases, provide excellent opportunities for coalition-building and awareness-raising for the advancement of human rights in the United States. USHRN facilitates engagement in different parts of the reviews, including the submission of “shadow” or “stakeholder” reports, which are alternatives to the U.S. government’s reports to the United Nations, and participation of USHRN working groups, which inform the advocacy with the U.N.

During the treaty reviews, the United States submits a report outlining its compliance with its treaty obligations. These reports generally paint a rosy, often inaccurate, and uninformed picture (with little-to-no engagement with grassroots groups) of the conditions in the United States with respect to human rights. To counter this, USHRN organizes the alternative report submissions by U.S. civil society (grassroots and advocacy-based groups) and official testimonies before various U.N. Committees to give an accurate picture of human rights violations occurring in the United States. Advocates who are USHRN members and who are interested, willing, and able to engage with the mechanisms to advance their work domestically, travel to Geneva for the reviews. USHRN has provided travel funding and other support for these, mostly grassroots groups, in the past. That said, many human rights defenders in the United States understand that international human rights spaces can be challenging and were not necessarily designed for grassroots advocacy. With the United States Human Rights Network acting as a bridge to these international spaces, advocates—especially those most impacted by human rights abuses—see the value of being able to tell their stories to an international audience because it affords them a legal framework that is not available within U.S. jurisprudence and validates their experiences as being counter to basic human rights principles.

To give one example of a year in the organization’s recent history: In March of 2014, USHRN led a delegation to Geneva to testify before the United Nations Human Rights Committee regarding the United States’ implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). In August, it led another delegation to the United Nations

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination's review of the United States government's record under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (commonly known as ICERD or CERD). During the review process, the Committee received reports and heard testimony from over one hundred organizations. Among the civil society delegation were people directly impacted by human rights violations, including Ron Davis and Sybrina Fulton, Black parents whose respective sons (Jordan Davis and Trayvon Martin) were shot to death by White<sup>1</sup> vigilantes in Florida—one of many states with "Stand Your Ground" laws, which allow civilians to use deadly force when they believe they are under attack.

Addressing the killing of his son, Jordan Davis, aged 17, by armed vigilante Michael Dunn on November 23, 2012, Ron Davis said,

Regardless that my son didn't have a weapon, regardless that my son never touched a hair on his head, regardless that my son never even got out of the car to touch his car... in their mind, they say that they fear someone for whatever reason, they're able to take action... I think that's a human rights violation, that people can fear you in their mind even though you're not taking action against them, and they can still take action against you and try to get away with it.

(Davis as quoted in Edwards, 2014, para. 15)

Lamenting the limits to legal recourse for African Americans whose children had been killed by vigilantes in the United States, Davis noted that "[s]eventy percent of people who claim Stand Your Ground get off (are not convicted) in Florida," noting that "it's like the Wild Wild West" (Davis as quoted in Nebehay, 2014, para. 12). This sense that the U.S. legal system did

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<sup>1</sup> Editorial note: in adherence with the style guide of the American Psychological Association, the IJHRE capitalizes all racial groups in our articles, including Black, White and Indigenous. There has been general consensus for the capitalization of the "B" in "Black" with more debates around the term "White" versus "white." As scholar Eve L. Ewing writes (see [here](#)): "Language and racial categories have some important things in common: They are fluid, they are inherently political, and they are a socially constructed set of shared norms that are constantly in flux as our beliefs and circumstances change." We understand that language and conventions may change, and have decided at this moment in time, to capitalize all racial groups referenced in this special issue.

not adequately address—and in many cases did not even protect—racist violence was further supported by Trayvon Martin’s mother, Sybrina Fulton, who stated that “[a]lthough ‘Stand your Ground’ may seem like it’s a neutral law on the surface ... it really isn’t, the way it is applied in the USA.” Later that same year, in November, another delegation led by USHRN testified in Geneva, as the parents of Michael Brown (the unarmed Black teenager who was killed by Ferguson, Missouri by police officer Darren Wilson) and other impacted families testified before the Committee Against Torture (CAT). During the same review, Martinez Sutton spoke about the killing of his sister, Rekia Boyd, an unarmed Black woman shot and killed by Dante Servin, an off-duty Chicago police detective. And Breanna Champion of the organization We Charge Genocide (WCG) testified about the beating of her brother by police, as the WCG delegation stood in protest of the murder of Dominique Franklin Jr. at the hands of the Chicago police.

### **“You in the United Nations Are Your Brothers and Sisters’ Keepers:” The Case of George Floyd at the United Nations**

Following the killing of George Floyd and the global outrage that saw protestors fill streets across the globe, the United States Human Rights Network, the ACLU, and Professor Gay McDougall, a former member of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), drafted a letter to the U.N. Human Rights Council, requesting a Special Session and asking the United Nations to mandate an independent commission of inquiry into the “extrajudicial killings and violent law enforcement responses to protests, including the attacks against protestors and journalists.” This letter from June 8, 2020 (click [here](#) for the full text of the letter), also calls for “a United Nations investigation into the firing of tear gas by President Trump in violation of international standards on the use of force” (ACLU, 2020, para 1). Within 48 hours, more than 650 organizations from 66 countries signed onto the letter, as well as the families of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Philando Castile, and Michael Brown, urging member states of the United Nations Human Rights Council to urgently convene a Special Session on the situation of human rights in

the United States, in order to respond to the unfolding grave human rights crisis borne out of the repression of nationwide protests (ACLU, 2020, para. 2).

Why an international commission of inquiry for the United States? E. Tendayi Achiume, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Racism, states the following in support of this effort by civil society:

Because the systemic racism in law enforcement in the United States is a human rights crisis of existential proportions, and the domestic legal and policy regimes that ought to be relied upon to put an end to this crisis have never been able to do so. (para. 5)

“For Black people in the United States,” Achiume further notes, “the domestic legal system has utterly failed to acknowledge and confront the racial injustice and discrimination that is so deeply entrenched in law enforcement.” The point, Achiume argues,

is not that an international commission of inquiry will solve the problem of systemic racism in law enforcement in the United States. Instead, it is that victims of systemic racism in the United States, who face the daily, unabated and genuine risk of death in encounters with law enforcement deserve the assistance and expertise of an international human rights investigative body to chart a just path forward. (para 9)

In response to this letter, on June 12, 2020, the African Group, the arm of the African Union that represents the continent’s 54 U.N. member states, called on the United Nations Human Rights Council (click [here](#) to see the letter at the end of this article by Dieudonné Désiré Sougouri, representative of Burkina Faso) to organize an urgent debate, which is functionally the same as a special session, on racism and police violence, “in the context of global mobilization after the death of George Floyd in the United States” (AFP, para. 1). On June 15, USHRN, ACLU, and its partner in Geneva, the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR), began to advocate with member states of the Human Rights Council for the passage of a strong resolution put forth by the African Group which had two important elements: It strongly condemned

the continuing racial discriminatory and violent practices perpetrated by law enforcement agencies against Africans and of People of African Descent and structural racism endemic to the criminal justice system, in the United States of America and other parts of the world recently affected.

It also demanded the establishment of

an independent international commission of inquiry, to be appointed by the President of the Human Rights Council to establish facts and circumstances related to the systemic racism, alleged violations of International Human Rights Law and abuses against Africans and of People of African Descent in the United States of America and other parts of the world recently affected. (click [here](#) to see the draft resolution, also at the end of this article).

Testifying via video before the Human Rights Council on June 17, 2020, Philonise Floyd, George Floyd's brother, said,

My family and I have had to watch the last moments of his life when he was tortured to death including the eight minutes and forty-six seconds one officer kept his knee on my brother's neck. The officers showed no mercy, no humanity, and tortured my brother to death in the middle of the street in Minneapolis with a crowd of witnesses watching and begging them to stop—showing us Black people the same lesson yet again: Black lives do not matter in the United States of America.

He further argued, "I am my brother's keeper. You in the United Nations are your brothers and sisters' keepers in America. You have the power to help us get justice for my brother." "I'm asking you to help him. I'm asking you to help me. I'm asking you to help us, Black people in America," Floyd added, asking for an independent commission to investigate police conduct in the United States (United Nations News, 2020, para. 5).

Two days later, on June 19, the UNHRC, in its 43<sup>rd</sup> session, debated a resolution condemning racial discrimination in the United States. The final resolution, (A/HRC/RES/43/1), passed unanimously without a vote; it advocated "[t]he promotion and protection of the human rights and

fundamental freedoms of Africans and of people of African descent against excessive use of force and other human rights violations by law enforcement officers” (para. 6). In so doing, the document specifically evokes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (OHCHR, 1966/1976), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD, 1969), and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT, 1987). Specifically, the resolution

*[s]trongly condemns* the continuing racially discriminatory and violent practices perpetrated by law enforcement agencies against Africans and people of African descent, in particular which led to the death of George Floyd on 25 May 2020 in Minnesota, as referred to in PP9, and the deaths of other People of African Descent and further condemn the structural racism in the criminal justice system. (A/HRC/RES/43/1, 2020, para. 19)

The Human Rights Council further expressed that it was

[a]larmed at the resurgence of violence, racial hatred, hate speech, hate crimes, neo-Nazism, neo-Fascism and violent nationalist ideologies based on racial or national prejudice, including the resurgence of racial superiority ideologies that incite hatred and violence against Africans and people of African descent, (2020, para. 5)

albeit without naming a specific geographic/national context for these ideologies and acts of violence. The document further “*[d]eplores* the recent incidents of excessive use of force and other human rights violations by law enforcement officers against peaceful demonstrators defending the rights of Africans and of people of African descent” and “[r]equests the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 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.”

However, as observers noted, the resolution's text "was watered down during closed-door negotiations from an initial draft explicitly calling for a U.N. commission of inquiry on racism in the United States and elsewhere" (Nebehay, 2020, para. 7). Although specific allegations against systemic racism within the United States were conspicuously vague in the final resolution, repeated references to the gruesome murder of George Floyd serve to highlight both the historical and geographic context that called for the passing of this document. Thus, the resolution "[w]elcom[es] all statements made by the special procedures regarding the killing of George Floyd" (A/HRC/43/L.50, 2020, para. 1). In the latter statement, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, noted,

The voices calling for an end to the killings of unarmed African Americans need to be heard. The voices calling for an end to police violence need to be heard. And the voices calling for an end to the endemic and structural racism that blights U.S. society need to be heard. (UN, 2020, para. 2)

ISHR delivered a statement by the ACLU, USHRN and other civil society groups reminding the human rights body that

American policing has never been a neutral institution. The first U.S. city police department was a slave patrol, and modern police forces have directed oppression and violence at Black people to enforce Jim Crow, wage the War on Drugs, and crack down on protests. (click [here](#) to see the full letter, also at the end of this article, from June 17, 2020).

The statement ended by asking for an Independent Commission of Inquiry and by stating,

The protesters around the world are demanding radical change; now is the time for accountability, for reimagining public safety and the role of police in a democratic society. It's time to dismantle structural racism and invest in people and communities of color. (ISHR, 2020)

## **“Our Freedom Struggle Has Then Become Internationalized”: Malcolm X’s Ground-breaking Advocacy in Cairo**

Compellingly, Resolution A/HRC/RES/43/1 is also “[t]aking note of the historic resolution on racial discrimination in the United States of America adopted at the first ordinary session of the Assembly of African Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, held in Cairo from 17 to 24 July 1964,” (2020, para. 5) which marked a pivotal moment in the long history of African Americans seeking redress for human rights violations within the United States. That resolution came to pass, the way it was worded, in large part because of the sustained efforts by Malcolm X, who was aided, during his stay in Cairo, by other members of a sizable African American expatriate community there—including by David Graham Du Bois, the son of Shirley and stepson of W.E.B. Du Bois.

After leaving the Nation of Islam on March 8, following his break with Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X spent most of 1964 in Africa and the Middle East, forging alliances with other anti-colonial thinkers. Writing (in revealing stenography style) in his journal in Lagos, Nigeria, on May 10, he notes, for instance, “Independent nations could pressure ‘justice’ for 22 million Amer (Africans)” (p. 46). Four days later, he notes, “Audience with [Kwame] Nkrumah at noon (for an hour)—well informed, concerned about AA [Afro-American] plight, unity of Afro-American people of African descent (Pan-Africanism) is key to problem” (p. 52, information in brackets was added by the editors of Malcolm’s journal). Malcolm’s experimenting here with different conventions—from “Amer (Africans)” to “Afro-American people of African descent”—illustrates quite well the connections he aimed to forge between Black communities in the United States and Africans. Like Ron Davis in 2014 and Philonise Floyd in 2020, Malcolm understood that the key to getting redress for injustices against African Americans in the United States was to appeal to allies abroad.

From Ghana, he thus reflects, also in May of 1964, on “seven days of overwhelming success building bridges of goodwill and better understanding at all levels of Ghanaian government and social circles concerning the true plight of the 22 million Afro-Americans” (p. 58). And



upon his return to Cairo (where he had already spent significant time that spring) from New York, he emphasizes “the need for the African Heads of State to intervene [on] behalf of the American Negroes in bringing our problem (human rights violations) before the UN or America’s heading for racial bloodbath” (p. 70). While other Black activists and their allies were lobbying Lyndon B. Johnson’s administration to pass civil rights laws, Malcolm’s focus had shifted towards the rhetoric and mechanisms of human rights legislation.

Thus, in an essay, entitled “Racism: The Cancer That Is Destroying America,” published in the *Egyptian Gazette* on August 25, 1964, Malcolm notes that his “first concern is with the oppressed group of people to which I belong, the 22 million Afro-Americans, for we, more than any other people on earth today, are deprived of these inalienable *human rights*” (p. 303, *italics in the original*). “The universal law of justice,” Malcolm expressed his faith in human rights law, “is sufficient to bring judgment upon the American whites who are guilty of racism. The same law will also punish those who have benefited from the racist practices of their forefathers and have done nothing to atone for the ‘sins of their fathers’” (p. 303). Elaborating on this, he notes,

The common goal of 22 million Afro-Americans is respect as *human beings*, the God-given right to be a human being. Our common goal is to obtain the *human rights* that America has been denying us. We can never get civil rights in America until our *human rights* are first restored. We will never be recognized as citizens there until we are first recognized as *humans*. (p. 304, *italics in the original*)

Malcolm’s skepticism of civil rights legislation is profound. “The present American ‘system’ can never produce freedom for the black man,” he explains, because “[t]he American ‘system’ (political, economic, and social) was produced from the enslavement of the black man, and this present ‘system’ is capable only of perpetuating that enslavement” (Malcolm X, 1964, as cited in Boyd & Al-Shabazz, 2013, pp. 304-305).

As long as the freedom struggle of the 22 million Afro-Americans is labeled a civil rights issue it remains a domestic problem under the jurisdiction of the United States, and as such, bars the intervention

and support of our brothers and sisters in Africa, Asia, Latin America, as well as that of the well-meaning whites of Europe. (p. 305)

He concludes, proposing that “once our struggle is lifted from the confining civil rights label to the level of *human rights*, our freedom struggle has then become *internationalized*” (p. 305).

Back in Cairo, Malcolm was accepted as an observer to the First Ordinary Session conference of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) (formed the year before in Addis Ababa) that took place from July 17 to 21, 1964. Malcolm’s status as an observer allowed him to submit a memorandum, entitled “Appeal to African Heads of State,” to the OAU delegates. Malcolm’s letter argues,

Since the 22 million of us were originally Africans, who are now in America not by choice but only by a cruel accident in our history, we strongly believe that African problems are our problems and our problems are African problems. (p. 73)

“We also believe,” he continues, “that as heads of the Independent African states you are the shepherd of *all* African peoples everywhere, whether they are still at home on the mother continent or have been scattered abroad” (p. 73). Malcolm’s memorandum was distributed on the first day of the conference, July 17, 1964, just one day after 15-year-old African American James Powell was shot and killed by New York Police Department officer Thomas Gilligan, causing people in Harlem (and later Brooklyn’s Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood) to rise up over the course of multiple days—at the very same time that African leaders convened in Cairo. “We, in America,” Malcolm concludes,

are your long-lost brothers and sisters, and I am here only to remind you that our problems are your problems. As the African-Americans ‘awaken’ today, we find ourselves in a strange land that has rejected us, and, like the prodigal son, we are turning to our elder brothers for help. We pray our pleas will not fall upon deaf ears. (p. 73)

After distributing his memorandum, Malcolm noted about his attendance of the conference itself that “all the Heads of State seem to avoid mentioning the US & its racism,” which only furthers his awareness of “the

importance of building bridges of communication, understanding & cooperation between Africans & Afro-Americans” (p. 86).

Although he himself was not able to speak at the conference and despite his skepticism, Malcolm X’s lobbying on behalf of African Americans was successful, as the OAU adopted a resolution on “Racial Discrimination in the United States” (AHG/Res. 15.I); it stated that “[c]onsidering that one hundred years have passed since the Emancipation Proclamation was signed in the United States of America” and “[n]oting with satisfaction the recent enactment of the Civil Rights Act designed to secure for American Negroes their basic human rights,” but also showed itself “[d]eeply disturbed, however, by continuing manifestations of racial bigotry and racial oppression against Negro citizens of the United States of America” (p. 123).

Just how groundbreaking and defiant both this resolution and Malcolm’s advocacy were becomes obvious when we situate both within the context of the African American freedom struggle of the 1950s and 1960s. Describing how, towards the end of World War II,

African American leadership, led by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), had already decided that only human rights could repair the damage that more than three centuries of slavery, Jim Crow, and racism had done to the African American community. (Anderson, 2003, p. 1)

Carol Anderson (2003) shows how successive American administrations, in the context of the Cold War, “systematically eliminated human rights as a viable option for the mainstream African American leadership” (p. 5). Post-war and Cold War policies, such as the Truman Doctrine, McCarthyism, and the creation of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, along with the persecution of Black scholars and activists that both criticized American domestic and foreign policies internationally, sought to limit the scope of Black internationalism. Daulatzai (2012) argues,

By policing Blackness and containing it within a nationalist framework, the new Cold War calculus fractured the potential for diasporic solidarities and an anti-imperialist critique, in turn

bolstering empire and creating a new kind of imperial citizen as the United States became a global superpower. (p. 15)

What Malcolm X did when he charged White American hegemony (domestic and global) in Cairo was to go up against this Cold War orthodoxy. “In the past the civil rights groups in America have been foolishly attempting to obtain constitutional rights from the same Government that has conspired against us to deny our people these rights,” he observed in his 1964 essay, adding that “[o]nly a world body (*a world court*) can be instrumental in obtaining those rights which belong to a human being by dint of his being a member of the human family” (p. 305). Like Medgar Evers, who drew connections between Kenya’s Mau Mau struggle and American Jim Crow, and like Martin Luther King, Jr., who understood that the lives of Black Americans and Vietnamese anti-colonial fighters were intertwined, Malcolm’s human rights struggle was cut short, of course, when he was assassinated on February 21, 1965.

Commenting on her father’s work towards “re-defin[ing] the American civil rights movement to include a Human Rights agenda,” Malcolm X’s daughter, Ilyasah Al-Shabazz, (2013) reminds us that

Malcolm’s father [Earl Little] had been beaten, tied to trolley tracks, and eventually slaughtered by an oncoming train for gathering signatures on a petition to bring the United States up on charges before the League of Nations—for violating the human rights of twenty-two million African Americans. (p. 180)

As Shabazz here indicates, Black internationalist struggles for human rights have a long legacy in the United States. Scholars like Michael West, William Martin, James Meriwether, Brenda Plummer, and Alex Lubin, among others, have established Black internationalism as the understanding that African American freedom struggles in the United States were tied to the politics of imperialism and decolonization abroad since the days of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Though they shared different Black internationalist agendas—from Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and W.E.B. Du Bois’ Pan-African Congress to Malcolm’s Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and the Black

Panther Party after its founding in 1966—organizations dedicated to Black freedom understood that color-lines were global and so were anti-racist struggles. Resolution A/HRC/RES/43/1, in its uneasy rhetoric “of Africans and of people of African descent” (para. 17) that at times avoids naming U.S. law enforcement and American Jim Crow specifically, nonetheless reflects this spirit.

### **Unfinished Business: The Aftermath of Resolution A/HRC/RES/43/1**

By appealing to a “world court,” Malcolm X argued, anti-racist activists can “take the racist American Government before the World Court and have the racists in it exposed and condemned as the criminals that they are” (1964, as cited in Boyd & Al-Shabazz, 2013, p. 305). Arguably, few recent American governments have been as openly racist as the administration of Donald J. Trump. While the administration’s domestic response to the killing of George Floyd (and related cases) and the unprecedented, multiracial mass protests was characterized by threats of military intervention and Nixonian law-and-order rhetoric, it also attempted to block efforts of getting the United Nations involved. Exactly two years after the United States left the Human Rights Council in June of 2018 (see Harris, 2018), the U.S. State Department worked hard to water down and render meaningless the proposed resolution. Behind the scenes, they sought to strip the resolution of all references to George Floyd, Minnesota, and the United States and also to remove any follow-up from the High Commissioner in order to shield the United States from scrutiny. Latin American and European countries also pressured the African Group to dilute the text of the resolution (El Hosseiny, 2020). The situation was volatile, and there are reports that the United States was in panic mode as the “State Department [under Mike Pompeo] was scrambling to avert a public relations disaster, dispatching its diplomats to pull strings and call in favors” (Toosi, 2020, para. 3).

Thus, advocates working behind the scenes in Geneva report that many of the countries objecting to a resolution holding the United States accountable in more specific ways for its Jim Crow remnants are the same

actors who lead U.N. independent commissions of inquiry around the world to hold other countries, particularly in the Global South, the Middle East and Latin America, accountable for their human rights violations. Though the same criteria should apply to the United States, it quickly became clear that this process “was not about merit or principles, it was about power and politics” (El Hosseiny, 2020). That said, while many Western states defended the United States, Southern African states, including Namibia, Botswana, and South Africa, for instance, sought to hold the United States accountable for its human rights violations. Tellingly, during the urgent debate, Namibia was the only country to condemn racism and police violence in the United States, while South Africa urged countries to stand on the right side of history by not diminishing, minimizing, or making general blanket statements because that, in itself, is a form of racism (El Hosseiny, 2020). The historic nature of these efforts should not be undersold since special sessions and urgent debates are very rare occurrences. While the Council has held only four previous urgent debates and 28 special sessions since its first meeting in June 2006, the debate on June 17 and the ensuing resolution are exceptional for addressing—for the first time—a human rights situation in a P5 country (P5 refers to the permanent members of the Security Council: Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States). Although neither the request for the debate nor the resolution says that it is about the United States, both are clearly about the country (Splinter, 2020).

Following the Human Rights Council Resolution passed on Juneteenth—a holiday celebrated amongst many African Americans to mark the emancipation of those who had been enslaved in the United States—USHRN worked with the ACLU to write a new letter to the High Commissioner calling for her mandated report on systemic racism and violations of international human rights law against Africans and people of African descent by law enforcement agencies to be meaningful and contribute to true accountability. Supported by Mothers Against Police Brutality, 144 family members of people killed by the police (including family members of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Oscar Grant, Philando Castile, and Michael Brown Jr.), and over 360 civil society groups from

across the globe signed on to the letter (click [here](#) to see the full letter which is also at the end of this article) by early August (USHRN, 2020). The letter called for an “inclusive process for producing the report with maximum meaningful participation and engagement from directly impacted communities and other relevant stakeholders” (ACLU, 2020, para. 3).

Importantly, the letter called for “inclusive outreach to communities of color and the creation of meaningful, safe, and accessible opportunities for consultation. It must also involve modalities to provide testimonies, evidence, and other relevant information and materials to encourage unhindered reporting from those fearing retaliation” (para. 6). The letter also called for the High Commissioner’s report to “respect the memory of George Floyd and other victims of police violence” while outlining “steps and measures that must be taken to dismantle structural racism and bring the country’s criminal legal system in line with international human rights norms” (2020, para. 6). As a response, the High Commissioner is working with the United States Human Rights Network, ACLU, and other advocates to ensure inclusivity in the process. In November of 2020, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) issued a call for submission to help the U.N. address issues of systemic racism and police violence globally.<sup>2</sup> On February 18, 2021, OHCHR undertook a public consultation with civil society organizations working on issues of systemic racism against people of African descent, including but not limited to the area of law enforcement, to make interventions followed by brief remarks/exchange by/with OHCHR. The submissions and hearing of testimonies will be used to inform the High Commissioner’s report to the U.N. Human Rights Council in June 2021.

This type of engagement is unprecedented, so the world is waiting to see what happens next. As Black communities in the United States continue to be ravished by the untethered spread of COVID-19, police

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<sup>2</sup> More information can be found here: <https://www.idpad.org/ohchr-report>

killings, voter suppression during the recent election, and other issues, we are reminded that Malcolm X, and those who would come after him, saw value in linking our struggles with those of marginalized communities around the world. By internationalizing our issues, we receive inspiration from, and we inspire those people around the world whose voices have yet to be heard, but who are ready and willing to speak. We hear you.

*Note: After the references are the complete copies of letters and other documents sent to the United Nations by USHRN that were mentioned in the text of the article.*



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June 8, 2020

To Members of the United Nations Human Rights Council

**Re: Request for the Convening of a Special Session on the Escalating Situation of Police Violence and Repression of Protests in the United States**

Excellencies,

The undersigned family members of victims of police killings and civil society organizations from around the world, call on member states of the UN Human Rights Council to urgently convene a Special Session on the situation of human rights in the United States in order to respond to the unfolding grave human rights crisis borne out of the repression of nationwide protests. The recent protests erupted on May 26 in response to the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, which was only one of a recent string of unlawful killings of unarmed Black people by police and armed white vigilantes.

We are deeply concerned about the escalation in violent police responses to largely peaceful protests in the United States, which included the use of rubber bullets, tear gas, pepper spray and in some cases live ammunition, in violation of international standards on the use of force and management of assemblies including recent U.N. Guidance on Less Lethal Weapons.

Additionally, we are greatly concerned that rather than using his position to serve as a force for calm and unity, President Trump has chosen to weaponize the tensions through his rhetoric, evidenced by his promise to seize authority from Governors who fail to take the most extreme tactics against protestors and to deploy federal armed forces against protestors (an action which would be of questionable legality).

Our greatest concern is that the violence and counter-violence are diverting the gaze of the global community away from the pain being expressed by a nation in mourning over the callous manner of the 8 minutes and 46 seconds that ended George Floyd's life while a group of police stood and watched, about the death of more than 100,000 souls from the coronavirus – [disproportionately killing Black, Brown and Indigenous Peoples](#) – and about how injustice never ends and equality never comes. There is serious concern that the tear gas and police-induced havoc will obscure the legitimate passion of these demonstrations. The voices of the demonstrators must be heard. Their demand is that the endemic racism, hatred, fear and disparity finally be confronted.

News media reported that [seven people were struck by gunfire at a protest in Louisville](#); at least one person – David McAtee, who was serving food to protesters at a demonstration – was killed by police gunfire in Kentucky. In Ohio, [pepper spray](#) was used on large crowds. Reports by [journalists on social media](#) indicate that rubber bullets were used in numerous places, including

Phoenix, Arizona, Los Angeles, California, Atlanta, Georgia, and Minneapolis, Minnesota. According to the [U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights](#), there have been “at least 200 reported incidents of journalists covering the protests being physically attacked, intimidated or arbitrarily arrested, despite their press credentials being clearly visible.” The police arrested more than [11,000 people](#) across the United States.

Furthermore, it appears that police departments across the United States, backed by federal government agencies (like [CBP](#), which regularly [violates civil and human rights](#)), are escalating the situation with further militarization and excessive use of force against protesters. We note with particular concern the deployment of at least 62,000 National Guard soldiers in two dozen states, the encouragement of the use of violence and mass arrests by President Donald Trump on social media, and his labeling of the protesters as “terrorists.” Several cities around the country have imposed sweeping night curfews that triggered further inflammation of the atmosphere and create yet another justification for additional police violence and arrests.

It is well established that neither the use of violence by a small number of people or damage to property suspend the right to protest of all those gathered and do not provide a license to escalate police responses and use of excessive or deadly force. In all circumstances, the police response must remain within the limits of the law and seek to de-escalate situations rather than inflame them by resorting to life-threatening weapons.

The right to peaceful assembly and demonstration must be protected. This mandate is even more compelling with regard to the rights of minority communities, especially people of African descent, to speak out against racist practices they have endured for centuries. Recent police killings of unarmed Black people as well as police use of excessive force and repression of protests violate United States obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD).

Finally, the massive use of less-lethal weapons is compounded by the fact that the United States is one of the worst-hit countries by the global pandemic. [Health experts warned](#) that the use of tear gas may place individuals at a higher risk of contracting a respiratory illness and can have long-term effects on respiratory function. We are also concerned that mass arrests and detention of protesters will only exacerbate the risk of infection in jails that are already an epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States.

In light of these grave concerns, the undersigned urge the members of the U.N. Human Rights Council to convene a special session of the HRC in order to respond appropriately to this situation of escalating human right abuses with the aim of mandating an independent inquiry into:

- the recent history of racist policing in cities across the country that continues with seeming impunity from the killing of Michael Brown and the repression of protests in Ferguson, Missouri, to the murder of George Floyd.
- allegations of excessive use of force against peaceful protesters and journalists in the demonstrations in U.S. cities since the murder of George Floyd.



The inquiry should report its findings to the Human Rights Council and should include recommendations on how to ensure that the United States upholds its human rights obligations, including in the context of policing, protests and assemblies. Further, the report should address the responsibility of the United States to end impunity for police violence and other serious human rights violations through appropriate disciplinary actions, prosecutions and fair trials.

The Council should call on the United States to give those conducting this inquiry, as well as other U.N. officials (including special procedures mandate holders), full and unrestricted access to interview witnesses, including members of the police, to inspect places of detention, and to monitor trials related to the protests and their aftermath.

*Family members of victims of police violence who have endorsed this letter:*

Philonise Floyd and Quincy Mason, brother and son of George Floyd

Tamika Palmer, mother of Breonna Taylor

Valerie Castile, mother of Philando Castile

Lezley McSpadden, mother of Michael Brown



**Son Excellence Madame l'Ambassadrice Elisabeth TICHY-FISSELBERGER**

Représentante permanente de l'Autriche auprès de l'Office des Nations Unies  
et des institutions spécialisées à Genève  
Présidente du Conseil des droits de l'homme  
Avenue Giuseppe Motta 35-37  
1202 Genève

Email: [genf-ov@bmeia.gv.at](mailto:genf-ov@bmeia.gv.at)  
[hrcouncil@ohchr.org](mailto:hrcouncil@ohchr.org)

Genève, le 12.06.2020

**Demande de la tenue d'un débat urgent sur les violations actuelles des droits de l'homme d'inspiration raciale, le racisme systémique, la brutalité policière et la violence contre les manifestations pacifiques, à l'occasion de la reprise de la 43e session du Conseil des droits de l'homme : 15-19 juin 2020**

**Madame la Présidente,**

Les événements tragiques du 25 mai 2020 à Minneapolis aux États-Unis qui ont entraîné la mort de George Floyd, ont déclenché des protestations dans le monde entier contre l'injustice et la brutalité auxquelles les personnes d'ascendance africaine sont confrontées quotidiennement dans de nombreuses régions du monde. La mort de George Floyd n'est malheureusement pas un incident isolé ; de nombreux cas antérieurs de personnes non armées d'ascendance africaine ayant subi le même sort en raison de violences policières incontrôlées, sont légions. Malheureusement, le sort de ces nombreuses autres victimes n'a pas attiré l'attention, car ce qu'elles ont subi n'ont pas été véhiculé sur les réseaux sociaux à la vue de tous.

Dans leur déclaration du 5 juin 2020, les 47 titulaires de mandat au titre des procédures spéciales du Conseil des droits de l'homme des Nations Unies ont déclaré que : « le soulèvement au niveau national (sic. aux USA) est une protestation contre le racisme systémique, fruit de la violence raciale parrainée par l'État et accorde l'impunité à cette violence. Le soulèvement reflète également la frustration du public qui proteste contre les nombreuses autres manifestations flagrantes du racisme systémique dont il a été impossible d'ignorer ces derniers mois, y compris le taux de mortalité, l'impact socioéconomique ainsi que les restrictions racialement disparates constatées dans la lutte liée à la pandémie COVID-19 ». « Les manifestations dont le monde est témoin sont un rejet de l'inégalité et de la discrimination raciales fondamentales qui caractérisent la vie aux États-Unis pour les Noirs et les autres personnes de couleur. »

Le tollé international soulevé par cette situation souligne l'urgence pour le Conseil des droits de l'homme de discuter de ces questions d'actualité, comme l'ont clairement relevé la semaine dernière, les lettres adressées au Conseil des droits de l'homme par la Société civile, à cet égard.

Au nom de Leurs Excellences, les Représentants permanents et Ambassadeurs du Groupe africain, en ma qualité de Coordonnateur des questions des droits de l'homme, j'ai l'honneur de transmettre par la présente au Conseil des droits de l'homme, une demande de tenir un débat urgent sur les violations actuelles des droits de l'homme d'inspiration raciale, le racisme systémique, la brutalité policière contre les Personnes d'ascendance africaine et la violence contre les manifestations pacifiques, pour appeler à mettre un terme à ces injustices.

Le principal objectif du Dialogue urgent est de s'attaquer aux causes structurelles et immédiates de la discrimination raciale qui prévaut dans le monde entier, avec un impact énorme sur la jouissance des droits de l'homme, en particulier par les Personnes d'ascendance africaine.

Ce débat urgent sera également l'occasion de rappeler aux États, leurs engagements de lutter contre ces violations des droits de l'homme, lorsqu'ils ont adopté la Déclaration et le Programme d'action de Durban il y a près de 20 ans.

Nous espérons que le dialogue tracera la voie à suivre et proposera des stratégies sur la manière dont les différents mécanismes des droits de l'homme et les organes conventionnels concernés, peuvent améliorer leur travail afin d'obtenir des résultats tangibles pour la fin de la discrimination raciale, en coopération avec les pays concernés.

Madame la Présidente, nous vous serions reconnaissants de bien vouloir considérer et faciliter en priorité cette demande.

**Respectueusement votre**

The image shows a handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to be 'Dieudonné W. Désiré Sougouri'. To the right of the signature is a circular official stamp. The stamp contains the text 'REPRÉSENTANT PERMANENT DU BURKINA FASO' around the top and 'GENÈVE' at the bottom. In the center of the stamp is the national emblem of Burkina Faso, which features a shield with a cross and a star, flanked by two figures. The text 'L'Ambassadeur' and 'Représentant Permanent' is also visible within the stamp.

**Son Excellence Monsieur l'Ambassadeur Dieudonné W. Désiré Sougouri**

Représentant permanent du Burkina Faso auprès de l'Office des Nations Unies et des autres Organisations Internationales à Genève  
Coordonnateur du Groupe Africain pour les questions des droits de l'homme

\* <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25927&LangID=E>

**PJ : version anglaise**

## Unofficial translation

Her Excellency Ambassador Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger  
Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations Office and specialized institutions  
in Geneva  
President of the Human Rights Council  
Avenue Giuseppe Motta 35-37  
1202 Geneva  
Email: [genf-ov@bmeia.gv.at](mailto:genf-ov@bmeia.gv.at)  
[hrcouncil@ohchr.org](mailto:hrcouncil@ohchr.org)

Geneva, June 12, 2020

### ***Request for an Urgent Debate on the current racially inspired human rights violations, systemic racism, police brutality and the violence against peaceful protest, during the resumed 43<sup>rd</sup> session of the Human Rights Council: 15-19 June 2020***

The tragic events that unfolded on 25 May 2020 in Minneapolis USA and resulted in the death of George Floyd, sparked protests all over the world against the injustice and brutality that People of African Descent face daily in many parts of the world. The death of George Floyd is unfortunately not an isolated incident, with many previous cases of unarmed persons of African descent suffering the same fate due to unchecked police brutality. Sadly the fates of many other victims attracted no attention, as they were not captured on social media for all to see.

In the statement on 5 June 2020, issued by independent experts of the Special Procedures of the United Nations Human Rights Council, the **47 Special Procedure holders** stated the uprising nationally (sic. in USA) is a protest against systemic racism that produces state-sponsored racial violence, and licenses impunity for this violence. The uprising also reflects public frustration and protest against the many other glaring manifestations of systemic racism that have been impossible to ignore in the past months, including the racially disparate death rate and socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the disparate and discriminatory enforcement of pandemic-related restrictions." " The protests the world is witnessing, are a rejection of the fundamental racial inequality and discrimination that characterize life in the United States for black people, and other people of color."

The international outcry stress the urgency for the Human Rights Council to discuss these most topical issues as clearly demonstrated over the past week in the letters to the HRC by Civil Society, in this regard.

On behalf of Their Excellencies, the Permanent Representatives and Ambassadors of the African Group, in my capacity as Coordinator for Human Rights, I have the honour to convey an urgent request for the Human Rights Council to hold an Urgent Debate on the racially inspired human rights violations, police brutality against People of African Descent and the violence against the peaceful protests that call for these injustices to stop.

The main aim of the Urgent Dialogue is to address the structural and proximate causes of racial discrimination that prevails worldwide with tremendous impact on the enjoyment of human rights especially by People of African Descent.

The Urgent Debate will also be an opportunity to remind States of the commitments they made to address these human rights violations when they adopted the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action almost 20 years ago.

It is hoped that the dialogue will chart the way forward and propose strategies on how the different human rights mechanisms and relevant treaty body can improve their work as to bring about tangible results on the end of racial discrimination, in cooperation with concerned countries

Madam President, it would be appreciated if you could as a matter of priority consider and facilitate this request.

Yours respectfully

**Ambassador Dieudonné W. Désiré Sougouri**

Permanent Representative of Burkina Faso to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva.

Coordinator of the African Group on Human Rights issues.

\* <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25927&LangID=E>

Urgent Debate on "the current racially inspired human rights violations, systemic racism, police brutality and the violence against peaceful protest"  
Joint Statement submitted by the American Civil Liberties Union  
43rd Session of the Human Rights Council  
June 17, 2020

Ms. President:

American policing has never been a neutral institution. The first U.S. city police department was a slave patrol, and modern police forces have directed oppression and violence at Black people to enforce Jim Crow, wage the War on Drugs, and crack down on protests.

Policing in the United States originated in the slavery era when patrols were created to recapture runaway slaves, terrorize them in order to deter slave rebellion, and maintain a form of discipline for slave workers. Police often participated in or turned a blind eye to lynching and other acts of violence. While slavery formally ended June 19<sup>th</sup>, 1865 -- 155 years ago this week -- contemporary police and law enforcement in America in many ways continue to function as modern-day slave patrol: terrorizing Black people, killing with impunity, and criminalizing and controlling the lives of Black and poor communities.

Although having only recently gained the awareness it deserves from those outside the Black community, issues of race-based violence have long been woven into the fabric of American society. Black Americans are 2.5 times more likely to be killed by police than white Americans, despite constituting only 13% of the population. They are also 1.3 times more likely to be unarmed when killed by police.

George Floyd's horrific murder has sparked an unstoppable global movement demanding concrete and bold actions to end racist policing practices and impunity for police violence.

While we recognize the global nature of racism and police violence and stand in full solidarity with victims of police violence everywhere, this Council must ensure that the outcome of this Urgent Debate is focused on efforts to hold the United States accountable. This is an opportunity to demonstrate that no State, no matter how powerful, is above scrutiny, and to demonstrate cross-regional support for the Council's integrity.

The Council should mandate the creation of an independent international accountability mechanism not only to document and investigate extrajudicial killings of unarmed Black people, but also heavily militarized police violence against protesters and journalists. Since May 26<sup>th</sup>, there have been over 400 instances of journalists being detained, assaulted, or otherwise prevented from performing their duties by police. Peaceful protesters have experienced injuries, and sometimes death, from tear gas, rubber bullets, and other crowd control tactics used by the police.

Partial or half-baked measures of accountability won't remedy structural racism. We therefore ask you to heed the demand of family members of victims of police violence, including George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Philando Castile, and Michael Brown, who together with more than 660 organizations from 66 countries around the world, asked you to hold this urgent session and mandate an effective accountability mechanism.

The protesters in the streets across the United States and around the world are demanding radical change; now is the time for accountability, for reimagining public safety and the role of police in a democratic society. It's time to dismantle structural racism and invest in people and communities of color. We urge the Council to respond rapidly and effectively, and mandate an independent investigation into U.S. racist policing practices and suppression of peaceful protests. We cannot remain complicit in the oppression of Black Americans and must take immediate action to end this legacy of state-sanctioned violence.





# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

### Forty-third session

24 February–13 March and 15–23 June 2020

Agenda item 1

### Organizational and procedural matters

## Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 19 June 2020

### 43/1. Promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Africans and of people of African descent against excessive use of force and other human rights violations by law enforcement officers

*The Human Rights Council,*

*Reaffirming* the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all,

*Recalling* the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour or national origin,

*Recalling also* the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and bearing in mind the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action,

*Recalling further* its previous resolutions on the comprehensive follow-up to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and the effective implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, and the International Decade for People of African Descent as proclaimed by the General Assembly in its resolution 68/237 of 23 December 2013,

*Recalling* the General Assembly resolutions in this regard, in particular Assembly resolution 74/137 of 18 December 2019, and the imperative need for their full and effective implementation,

*Alarmed* at the resurgence of violence, racial hatred, hate speech, hate crimes, neo-Nazism, neo-Fascism and violent nationalist ideologies based on racial or national prejudice, including the resurgence of racial superiority ideologies that incite hatred and violence against Africans and people of African descent,



*Recognizing* that racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance have a deep negative impact on the enjoyment of human rights, and therefore require a united and comprehensive response from the international community,

*Recalling* Human Rights Council resolution 7/34 of 28 March 2008, and all subsequent resolutions on the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, including those of the Commission on Human Rights,

*Taking note* of the historic resolution on racial discrimination in the United States of America adopted at the first ordinary session of the Assembly of African Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, held in Cairo from 17 to 24 July 1964, and the statement made by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission which condemned the murder of George Floyd in Minnesota, United States of America, on 25 May 2020,

*Taking note also* of the statement made by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on 8 June 2020 expressing its strong condemnation of the murder of George Floyd and repudiating structural racism, the systemic violence against Afro-Americans, impunity and the disproportionate use of force by law enforcement officers,

*Recalling* the Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials and the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials,

*Encouraging* States to look into their manuals and guidelines used for training law enforcement officers with a view to identifying the proportionality of measures in the handling of suspects and other persons in custody, with respect to the treatment of Africans and people of African descent,

*Reaffirming* the importance of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action in advancing racial equality, ensuring equal opportunities for all, guaranteeing equality before the law and promoting social, economic and political inclusion without distinctions based on race, age, sex, disability, descent, national or ethnic origin, religion or economic or other status,

*Welcoming* all statements made by the special procedures regarding the killing of George Floyd, and in particular their joint statement of 5 June 2020, and the statement made by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on 3 June 2020,

1. *Strongly condemns* the continuing racially discriminatory and violent practices perpetrated by law enforcement agencies against Africans and people of African descent, in particular which led to the death of George Floyd on 25 May 2020 in Minnesota, as referred to in the ninth preambular paragraph above, and the deaths of other people of African descent, and also condemns the structural racism in the criminal justice system;

2. *Deplores* the recent incidents of excessive use of force and other human rights violations by law enforcement officers against peaceful demonstrators defending the rights of Africans and of people of African descent;

3. *Requests* the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, with the assistance of relevant special procedure 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 people of African descent, to contribute to accountability and redress for victims;

4. *Also requests* the High Commissioner to examine government responses to anti-racism peaceful protests, including the alleged use of excessive force against protesters, bystanders and journalists;

5. *Calls upon* all States and all relevant stakeholders to cooperate fully with the High Commissioner in the preparation of the report;

6. *Requests* the High Commissioner to provide an oral update on the preparation of her report to the Human Rights Council at its forty-fifth and forty-sixth sessions, and to



present a comprehensive report to the Council at its forty-seventh session, to be followed by an interactive dialogue;

7. *Also requests* the High Commissioner to include updates on police brutality against Africans and people of African descent in all her oral updates to the Human Rights Council;

8. *Invites* all treaty bodies, special procedure mandate holders and international and regional human rights mechanisms, within their respective mandates, to pay due attention to all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, including against Africans and people of African descent, and to bring them to the attention of the Human Rights Council;

9. *Decides* to remain seized of the matter.

*44th meeting  
19 June 2020*

[Adopted without a vote.]

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August 3, 2020

H.E. Michelle Bachelet  
United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Palais Wilson  
52 rue des Pâquis  
CH-1201 Geneva, Switzerland

(via email: [mbachelet@ohchr.org](mailto:mbachelet@ohchr.org))

Dear High Commissioner,

The undersigned families of victims of police violence and civil society organizations write with regard to the Human Rights Council resolution (A/HRC/43/L.50) *on the promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Africans and of people of African descent against excessive use of force and other human rights violations by law enforcement officers*.

As you know, the resolution has mandated your office, 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 that your office “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.”

While we were disappointed that the Council adopted a watered-down resolution due to enormous diplomatic pressure from the United States and other allied countries, we consider the outcome of the *urgent debate* a crucial first step towards full accountability for systemic police violence against Black people in the United States and more generally against people of African descent around the world. We wish to make the following recommendations and suggestions to ensure effective implementation of the resolution and a transparent, inclusive process for producing the report with maximum meaningful participation and engagement from directly impacted communities and other relevant stakeholders.

**First**, we strongly believe that the High Commissioner’s report should center the lived experiences of people of African descent and be informed primarily by individuals and communities directly impacted by structural racism and police violence. This requires inclusive outreach to communities of color and the creation of meaningful, safe, and accessible opportunities for consultation. It must also involve modalities to provide testimonies, evidence, and other relevant information and materials to encourage unhindered reporting from those fearing retaliation.

**Second**, for the report to fulfill the mandate of the Council's resolution and respect the memory of George Floyd and other victims of police violence, it must examine and highlight individual cases of extrajudicial killings of people of African descent and entrenched impunity for police violence rooted in structural racism. The resolution specifically mentions the killing of George Floyd, whose horrific murder by a Minneapolis police officer (and the complicity of other officers) shocked the world and sparked unprecedented protests calling for police accountability and racial justice. The reference to the killing of "other Africans and of people of African descent" suggests that Floyd's killing should not be the only case examined and highlighted in the report.

**Third**, we encourage you to thoroughly examine the history of racist policing in the United States and other countries in order to make recommendations for a concrete path forward regarding the Council's role to ensure effective accountability and follow-up. The report should outline steps and measures that must be taken to dismantle structural racism and bring the country's criminal legal system in line with international human rights norms. The report should build and expand upon, rather than replicate, previous research and reports published by regional and international human rights bodies, including UN treaty bodies and relevant Special Mandate Holders. Extensive research has already been completed by the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance on racism, the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, and the UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

**Fourth**, we are fully aware of the extraordinary financial challenges and limited resources at your disposal, as well as the overwhelming responsibilities of your Office, especially in response to the ongoing global health and economic crises imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, we believe the implementation of this Council resolution resulting from an historic *urgent debate* should be of high priority. Sufficient resources must be allocated to ensure that the report comprehensively and thoroughly examines structural racism and police violence. We cannot exaggerate the unfathomable importance of this issue for millions of people and its implications on the full enjoyment of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms for people of African descent, Indigenous Peoples, and racial and ethnic minorities. In the United States alone, there are over a thousand people killed by law enforcement every year, below are just some of the signatures of the many family members, whose loved ones were killed by police that you will never hear of in the mainstream media. They have long been denied justice and accountability and treated as second class citizens; the opportunity to begin rectifying this wrong rests in your hands.

**Fifth**, the examination of racist police violence and government responses to antiracism protests, including the alleged use of excessive force against protesters, bystanders and journalists, must not be limited to desk research and/or a call for written submissions through notes verbales. Rather, it must be based on regional hearings and consultations, potentially facilitated by OHCHR's regional and field offices, that will provide adequate and meaningful opportunities for a wide range of voices and experiences to be presented. Holding public hearings will increase the transparency and legitimacy of the process and outcome. It will also create opportunities to educate

the public on racial justice and the importance of the Black Lives Matter movement at this historic juncture. It is possible to conduct more comprehensive outreach and consultations using virtual hearings and meetings, especially when travel and country visits are limited due to COVID-19 or financial constraints.

We stand ready to support you and your dedicated staff as you begin to implement the Council's resolution. Please accept our sincerest gratitude and appreciation for the enormous work you do each day as the world's collective human rights conscience.

Sincerely,

***The Families of the Victims of Police Brutality, by year that they lost their loved one:***

**2020**

Tamika Palmer, daughter **Breonna Taylor** killed by Louisville, KY Metro Police Department  
Philonise Floyd & Quincy Mason, brother & father **George Floyd** killed by Minneapolis, MN Police

Addie Kitchen, son **Steven DeMarco Taylor** killed by San Leandro, CA Police

Amy Fizer, daughter **Hannah Renee Fizer** killed by Pettis County, MO Police

Jeannie Williams, son **John Henry Ross II** killed by Harrisonburg City Police, Rockingham County VA Sheriffs, and VA State Police

**2019**

Desiree Lauren, son **Sterling Humbert** killed by Carrollton, TX Police

Irma Woodard-Duncklee, son **Michael Lee Duncklee** killed by Tucson, AZ Police

Lisa Finch, daughter **Adelina Finch** killed by Wichita, KS Police

Tammie Atchison Featherstone, nephew **Jimmy Atchison** killed by Atlanta, GA Police

Toni Biegert, son **Joseph R. Biegert** killed by Green Bay, WI Police

Trena & Quiana Miller, son **TreShun Miller** killed by Arlington, TX Police

**2018**

Azucena Albrethsen, son **Jacob E. Albrethsen** killed by Orem Police

Barbara Okamoto, grandson **Christopher A. Okamoto** killed by Bakersfield, CA Police

Catherine Young, son **D'Quan Young** killed by Washington DC Police

Iris E. Salazar, daughter **Leslie Salazar** killed by Austin, TX Police

Lisa Vargas, son **Anthony Daniel Vargas** killed by Los Angeles County, CA Sheriff's Deputies

Sabrina Passalacqua Courtroul, son **Tommy Henley** killed by Westminster, CO Police

Tiffany Simpson, son **Logan Simpson** killed by Bixby, OK Police

**2017**

Aaron Heather Nordin, brother **Jason Fanning** killed by St. Joseph Police

Angelique Negroni-Kearse, husband **Andrew Kearse** killed by Schenectady Police

Annice Evans, son **Angel Ramos** killed by Vallejo, CA Police

Candance Gipp, brother **G. Ryan Gipp Jr.** killed by Standing Rock Police Department

Constance Joann McGuire, **Tavaris Khalil McGuire** killed by Kokomo Police

Cynthia Brown, nephew **Kareen Ali Nadir Jones** killed by Columbus, OH Police  
Denise Fanning, son **Jason Fanning** killed by St. Joseph, MO Police  
Donna Chisesi, son **Jonathan David Victor** killed by Baldwin County, AL Sheriff's Office  
Gina Torres, son **Isaiah Hammett** killed by St. Louis City SWAT/ St. Louis, MO Police  
James & Kelly Ghaisar, son **Bijan Ghaisar** killed by Park Police in Northern Virginia  
Kathy Scott-Lykes, son **Jarvis Lykes** killed by Georgia State Troopers  
Katrina Johnson, cousin **Charleena Lyles** killed by Seattle, WA Police  
Kimberly Handy-Jones, son **Cordale Q. Handy**, killed by St. Paul, MN Police  
Krystal Wagner, son **Shane Allen Jensen** killed by Iowa Department of Natural Resources  
Lisa Finch, son **Andrew Finch** killed by Wichita, KS Police  
Marion Jones-Tamba, son **Tyler J. Lee** killed by Dekalb County Police  
Natasha Manning, son **Arties Manning III** killed by New Orleans, LA Police  
Pochya Mifflin, son **Cedric Jamal Mifflin** killed by Phenix City, AL Police  
Rosie Chavez, nephew **Jacob Dominguez** killed by San Jose Police  
Shae Powell, son **James Daniel Jill** killed by Arapahoe County Sheriff Department  
Tiffany Tabares, son **Dillan Tabares** killed by Huntington Beach, CA Police  
Valerie Rivera, son **Eric Rivera** killed by Los Angeles, CA Police Department  
Vanessa Moore, son **Hayden Stutz** killed by Canton, OH Police

## **2016**

Adrienne Hood, son **Henry Green** killed by Columbus, OH Police  
Alice Corley, son **Lionel Vincent Gibson Jr.** killed by Long Beach, CA Police  
Arlene Molinaro, son **Joseph Molinaro** killed by Carbondale, PA Police  
Ayanna Johnson, son **Darius Wimberly** killed by Bent Harbor, MI Police  
Cruz Weick, son **Sergio Daniel Weick** killed by Vista, CA Sheriff's Department  
Dalphine Jabril Robinson, son **Jabril B. Robinson** killed by Clayton County, GA Police  
Emily Gonzales, son **Jordan Love** killed by Corpus Christi, TX Police  
Felicia Thomas, son **Nicholas Thomas** killed by Smyrna, GA Police  
Heather Boland, cousin **Bodhi Phelps** killed by Gresham, OR Police  
Irene Kalonji, son **Christopher Kalonji** killed by Clackamas, OR Sheriffs & Officers  
Kim Thomas, son **Earl Shaleek Pickney** killed by Harrisburg, PA Police  
Kristina Murphy, husband **Christopher Murphy** killed by Woodland, CA Highway Patrol  
Lorenza Olivares, son **Elias Portillo** killed by Dallas, TX Police  
Monteria Robinson, son **Jamarion Robinson** killed by Atlanta, GA Police  
Pattie Gonzalez, husband **Fermin Vincent Valenzuela** killed by Anaheim, CA Police  
Sandy Sanchez, son **Anthony Nunez** killed by San Jose, CA Police  
Valerie Castile, son **Philando Castile** killed by St. Anthony, MN Police  
Vicki Timpa, son **Tony Timpa** killed by Dallas, TX Police

## **2015**

Annemarie Grant, brother **Thomas Purdy** killed by Washoe County Sheriffs & Reno Police  
Beverly Smith, son **Alonzo Smith**, killed by Special Police Officers in Washington, D.C.  
Diane Winter, nephew **Deven Guildford** killed by Eaton County, MI Sheriff Department  
Dominic Archibald, son **Nathaniel Pickett II** killed by San Bernardino County, CA Sheriff  
Dorothy Osteen, son **Bertrand Davis** killed by Dallas, TX Police  
Greg & Tammy Dyksma, son **Nicholas Dyksma** killed by Harris County, GA Deputy

Holly Galbraith Hester, son **Delaney Hester** beaten by Keller, TX Police  
Holly Quigley-Papke, son **Patrick Wetter** killed by Stockton, CA Police  
Jindia Blount, brother **Juan May** killed by Arlington, TX Police  
Judy Alderman Edens, son **Jason Alderman** killed by Bakersfield Police  
Kimberly Davis, son **Kimoni Davis** killed by Hanging Rock, OH Police  
LaToya Howell, son **Justus Howell** killed by Zion, IL Police  
Lynn Eagle Feather, son **Paul Castaway** killed by Denver, CO Police Department  
Pamela Fields, cousin **Derrick Hunt** killed by Long Beach, CA Police  
Sarah Fitch, son **Samuel Toshiro Smith** killed by Seattle, WA Police  
Sharon Irwin, grandson **Tony Terrell Robinson**, killed by Madison, WI Police  
Sheila Banks, godson **Corey Jones** killed by Palm Beach Gardens, FL Police Officer  
Stephanie Babb, brother **Captain Brian Avon Babb** killed by Eugene, OR Police  
Tania Hudson, son **Deaunte Bell** killed by Columbus, OH Police  
Tina Taylor, son **Christian Taylor** killed by Arlington, TX Police

### **2014**

Cheryl Jones, son **Marquise Jones** killed by San Antonio, TX Police  
Deanna Joseph, son **Andrew Joseph III** killed by Hillsborough County Sheriff Tampa, FL  
Denise Rankin, son **DaRon Gaylor Jr.** killed by Flint, MI Police  
Dorothy Holmes, son **Ronald Johnson III** killed by Chicago, IL Police  
Gina Thayne, nephew **Dillon Taylor** killed by Salt Lake City Police  
Janet Baker, son **Jordan Baker** killed by Houston, TX Police  
Kathi Roberts Gaynier, son **Andrew Gaynier** killed by Dallas, TX Police  
Laurie Valdez, partner **Antonio Guzman Lopez** killed by San Jose State, CA Police  
Lisa Mays-Parramore, son **Kelvin Mays** killed by Garland, TX Police  
Mary Wilsey, son **Keith Vidal** killed by Southport, NC Sheriff Department  
Michael Brown Sr. & Lezley McSpadden, son **Michael Brown Jr.** killed by Ferguson, MO Police  
Pamela Brooks, son **Amir Brooks** killed by Prince George's County Police  
Pamela Fields, nephew **Donte Parker** killed by San Bernardino County Sheriff  
Shirley & Sean Harrison, son & brother **Jason Harrison** killed by Dallas, TX Police Department  
Syreeta Myers, son **VonDerrit Myers Jr.** killed by St. Louis, MO Police  
Tressa Sherrod, son **John H. Crawford III** killed by Beavercreek, OH Police  
Vanessa White, son **Victor White III** killed by Iberia Parish, LA Sheriff Department  
Vickie McNeill Williams, son **Tinoris Williams** killed by Palm Beach County, FL Sheriff Department

### **2013**

Collette Flanagan, son **Clinton Allen** killed by Dallas Police  
Jenette Munoz, brother **Salvador Munoz** killed by Dallas, TX Police  
Kristine Rose, son **Jessie Rose** killed by Utica, NY Police  
Mary Wills, son **Taylor Thompson** killed by Escambia County, FL Sheriff  
Milca Perez & Gerardo Pineda Sr., son **Gerardo Pineda Jr.** killed by Dallas, TX Police  
Montye A. Benjamin, son **Jayvis L. Benjamin** killed by Avondale Estate Police, Decatur, GA  
Murlene Spinks, son **Anthony Skeaton** killed in Placer County Jail  
Pamela Fields, son **Donte Jordan** killed by Long Beach, CA Police

Royce Eckley, son **Marcus Anthony Merritt Sr.** killed by Louisiana State Police  
Susana Lopez, son **DeAngelo Lopez** killed by Compton, CA Sheriff Department  
Tawanda Jones, brother **Tyrone West** killed by Baltimore, MD Police  
Toni Taylor, son **Cary Ball Jr.** killed by St. Louis, MO Police  
Tyann Lavonne Salgado, son **Derek Brown** killed by Tennessee State Troopers  
Val Greenoak, son **Jesse Hamilton** killed by Santa Rosa Police Department  
Valarie Carey, sister **Miriam Carey** killed by U.S. Secret Service & Capital Police in Washington D.C.  
Virginia Bradford, son **Fred Bradford** killed by Dallas, TX Police

## **2012**

Amalia Villafane-Gregory, son **Sebastian Gregory** shot by Miami, FL Police  
Ashley Harper, brother **James Harper** killed by Dallas, TX Police  
Cynthia Mitchell, son **Mario Romero** killed by Vallejo, CA Police  
Genevieve A. Huizar, son **Manuel Diaz** killed by Anaheim, CA Police  
Jeralynn Brown-Blueford, son **Alan Blueford** killed by Oakland, CA Police  
Krissy Johnson, father **Inzer Allen Johnson** killed by Rainbow City, AL Police  
Lydia and Richard Adams, son **Seth Issac Adams** killed by Palm Beach, FL Sheriff Department  
Martinez Sutton, sister **Rekia Boyd** killed by off-duty Chicago, IL Detective  
Yolanda McNair, daughter **Adaisha Miller** killed by off-duty Detroit, MI Police

## **2011**

Anita Harris, grandson **Dawntrae Ta'Shawn Williams** killed by Gwinnett City, GA Police  
Anita Willis, grandson **Kerry Baxter** killed by Oakland, CA Police  
Bridzette Lane, son **Ralphael Briscoe** killed by Washington DC Police  
Jean Thaxton, son **Michael Lee Nida II** killed by Downey, CA Police

## **2010**

Alicia Alvarez, son **Johnathan Cuevas** killed by Los Angeles, CA Sheriff Lynwood Station  
Dionne Smith, son **James Rivera Jr.** killed by Stockton, CA Police

## **2009-2000**

Theresa Smith, son **Caesar Cruz** killed by Anaheim, CA Police, 2009  
Wanda Johnson, son **Oscar Grant** killed by BART Police in Oakland, CA, 2009  
Darlene Cain, son **Dale Graham** killed by Baltimore, MD Police, 2008  
Lola Jones, son **Derrick Jones** killed by Dallas, TX Police, 2008  
Alicia Kirkman, son **Angelo Miller** killed by Cleveland, OH Police, 2007  
Antoinette Washington, son **Brandon Washington** killed by Dallas, TX Police, 2007  
Corie Angle Cline, brother **Joe Whitehouse** killed by Anaheim, CA Police, 2007  
Sandra Lane, nephew **Bobby Walker** killed by Dallas, TX Police, 2007  
Theresa James, partner **Jay Martin Murphy Sr.** killed by Albuquerque, NM Police, 2007  
Verbena Hawkins, son **Trinton Hawkins** killed by Dallas, TX Police, 2007  
Greta Willis, son **Kevin L. Cooper** killed by Baltimore City police, 2006  
Kat Espinosa, son **Asa Benjamin Sullivan** killed by San Francisco, CA Police, 2006  
Patricia Scott, son **Raemawn Scott** killed by Powder Spring, GA Police, 2003  
Deborah Forge, son **Keenen L. Forge** killed by Dallas, TX Police, 2002

***1999-1990***

Marion Gray-Hopkins, son **Gary Hopkins Jr.** killed by Prince George County, MD Police, 1999  
Vicki & Sara Mokuria, father **Tesfaie Mokuria** killed by Dallas, TX Police, 1992