



DEBATE PACK

Number CDP-2017-0092, 17 March 2017

UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Westminster Hall Debate 21 March 2017 at 2.30pm

A Westminster Hall debate on the UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination will be held at 2.30pm on Tuesday 21 March 2017. The Member in charge of this debate is Dawn Butler MP.

Compiler: Sarah Pepin
Subject specialist: Pat
Strickland (Racial
Discrimination)

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The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is observed with a series of worldwide events on 21 March every year.

It was proclaimed through [United Nations Resolution 2142 \(XXI\)](#), “Elimination of all forms of racial discrimination”, adopted on 26 October 1966. The General Assembly called on the international community to redouble its efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination.¹

On that day, in 1960, police opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration in Sharpeville, South Africa, against the apartheid “pass laws”.

Human Rights Day in South Africa is a public holiday celebrated on 21 March each year.

A Programme for the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination was adopted by the General Assembly in 1979: [A/RES/34/24](#).

Since then:

the apartheid system in South Africa has been dismantled. Racist laws and practices have been abolished in many countries, and we have built an international framework for fighting racism, guided by the [International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#). The Convention is now nearing universal ratification, yet still, in all regions, too many individuals, communities and societies suffer from the injustice and stigma that racism brings.²

The [International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](#) was adopted on 21 December 1965 and entered into force on 4 January 1969.

1.2 Themes for the International Day

The **theme for 2017** is “racial profiling and incitement to hatred, including in the context of migration”.³

Racial and ethnic profiling is defined as “a reliance by law enforcement, security and border control personnel on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin as a basis for subjecting persons to detailed

¹ United Nation, [International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 21 March: background](#)

² Ibid

³ United Nations, [International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 21 March: home](#)

searches, identity checks and investigations, or for determining whether an individual is engaged in criminal activity”.⁴

The [New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants](#) was adopted by the General Assembly on 19 September 2016, at the [UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants](#). Section 14 states:

We strongly condemn acts and manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance against refugees and migrants, and the stereotypes often applied to them, including on the basis of religion or belief. Diversity enriches every society and contributes to social cohesion. Demonizing refugees or migrants offends profoundly against the values of dignity and equality for every human being, to which we have committed ourselves.

The **theme for 2016** was “challenges and achievements of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action – 15 years after”.

The [Durban Declaration and Programme of Action](#) was adopted at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in September 2001.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s 2016 message began:

In the 15 years since the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in Durban, South Africa, the world has undoubtedly come a long way in ensuring equal rights and non-discrimination. Member States have adopted new laws and safeguards and established new institutions dedicated to promoting and protecting human rights. Civil society organizations worldwide working on racism are increasingly active and vocal.

Yet we have not yet done enough. Today, we are witnessing a surge of intolerance, racist views and hate-driven violence. Racial profiling and violence against certain communities is on the rise. Economic hardship and political opportunism are triggering increased hostility towards minorities; this is being manifested most directly in anti-refugee, anti-migrant and, in particular, anti-Muslim bigotry, attacks and violence.

1.3 Campaigns and events

These campaigns and events are being promoted by the UN in relation to the International Day:

[Together](#) is a United Nations initiative to promote respect, safety and dignity for refugees and migrants. It was initiated during the [UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants](#) on 19 September 2016.

[Stand up for someone’s rights today](#) is a campaign launched by the UN Human Rights Office on Human Rights Day, 10 December, 2016. It aims to:

encourage, support and amplify what you do in your everyday life to defend human rights.

⁴ [Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Mutuma Ruteere](#), April 2015

The [Week of solidarity with the peoples struggling against racism and racial discrimination](#) begins on 21 March each year.

It was first decided as part of the Programme for the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination adopted by the General Assembly in 1979: [A/RES/34/24](#).

There will be a [Human Rights Council debate](#) on racial profiling and incitement to hatred, including in the context of migration, on 17 March 2017, in Geneva.

There will be a [General Assembly plenary meeting](#) in observance of the International Day, on 21 March 2017, in New York.

1.4 United Kingdom action

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office's UK Mission to the United Nations Geneva issued a [statement at the 50th anniversary celebration of ICERD - the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](#) , on 26 November 2016.

In this it stated that:

Today's anniversary reminds us that we must act more decisively to combat racism, racial discrimination and related intolerance.

The International Convention remains key to all efforts to prevent and eradicate racism. This will continue to be a priority for the UK.

Effective implementation of ICERD should be our priority in the fight against racism, rather than the elaboration of further 'complementary standards'.

Continued engagement with international mechanisms, especially the Committee and the Special Rapporteur, is also essential and we call on all states to draw on the expertise available to assist them.

The full text is reproduced in section 2.2 below.

2. Media

2.1 Articles and blogs

Glasgow Live

[Glasgow's marching against racism as part of international anti-racism day](#)

Robbie Armstrong 12 March 2017

Blog Preston

[Preston to unite against racism to mark international day of action](#)

Ed Walker 9 March 2017

Independent

[Government's controversial school census to record pupil nationality 'has all the hallmarks of racism', Lords warn](#)

Rachael Pells 1 November 2016

Guardian

[Labour must work with those directly affected by racism and inequality](#)

Zita Holbourne 30 September 2016

The Wire

[Rights groups demand implementation of anti-caste discrimination law in the UK](#)

Gaurav Vivek Bhatnagar 14 September 2016

The Voice

[UN: 'Rise in racism after Brexit'](#)

Vic Motune 3 September 2016

Guardian

[The Tories are entrenching racial inequality – Labour has a plan to tackle it](#)

Angela Rayner and Patrick Vernon 29 August 2016

Independent

[Theresa May launches probe to uncover 'difficult truths' about racial inequality in public services](#)

Jon Stone 26 August 2016

Independent

[Politicians' anti-immigrant rhetoric fuelled post-Brexit hate crime spike, United Nations says](#)

Jon Stone 26 August 2016

Rights Info

[Ethnic minorities in Britain face "entrenched race inequality" – UK's national equality body](#)

Natasha Holcroft-Emmess 18 August 2016

2.2 Press releases

Equality and Human Rights Commission

[Widespread inequality risks increasing race tensions, warns EHRC](#)

18 August 2016

UK Mission to the United Nations Geneva

[UK statement at the 50th anniversary celebration of ICERD - the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](#)

26 November 2015

The UK joins in celebrating the 50th anniversary of the adoption of ICERD, Geneva, 26 November 2015. Effective implementation of ICERD will continue to be a priority for the UK in the fight against racism.

Today's anniversary reminds us that we must act more decisively to combat racism, racial discrimination and related intolerance.

The International Convention remains key to all efforts to prevent and eradicate racism. This will continue to be a priority for the UK. Effective implementation of ICERD should be our priority in the fight against racism, rather than the elaboration of further 'complementary standards'. Continued engagement with international mechanisms, especially the Committee and the Special Rapporteur, is also essential and we call on all states to draw on the expertise available to assist them.

It is unfortunate that, notwithstanding some positive steps, intolerance and discrimination continues in all parts of the world. We call on

governments to take more decisive actions to fully implement their human rights obligations and address the ignorance that underlies such behaviour and attitudes.

For the UK's part, we have a strong legislative framework to protect communities from hostility and violence and we keep it under review to ensure that it remains effective and appropriate in the face of new and emerging threats. This includes separate racially and religiously aggravated offences, which carry a higher maximum penalty.

We are proud of our legislation, but we know that on its own it is not enough. The Prime Minister has therefore set ambitious goals to improve opportunity for black and ethnic minority people in the UK. We aim to achieve a 20% increase in ethnic minority people in employment and 20% more ethnic minority people going to university by 2020. We are seeking similar improvements in apprenticeships and recruitment in the police and the armed services. These are challenging targets, but we are determined to do all we can to meet them. We are also making further efforts to improve the reporting of hate crimes, to increase support for victims, and to challenge the attitudes that lead to hate crime in the first place.

The problem of prejudice, intolerance and discrimination affects all of our societies and therefore we should continue to work together as states to exchange views, share best practice and ensure that equality and non-discrimination are advanced through the multilateral system and bilaterally.

In concluding, the UK calls on all States to stand together against intolerance in all its forms and to seek a world in which everyone has equal protection of their rights, equal access to justice, education and economic opportunities regardless of ethnicity, nationality, colour or race.

3. Parliamentary Business

3.1 Early Day Motion

[UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#)

Dawn Butler:

That this House notes the UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on 21 March 2017; reaffirms this House's commitment to eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms from our society; and calls on the Government to officially mark the observance annually on 21 March each year.

14 March 2017 | Early Day Motion 1057 | 22 signatures

3.2 Parliamentary Questions

[Employment: Racial Discrimination](#)

Asked by: Lord Lester of Herne Hill

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they intend to take in response to the recommendations by Baroness McGregor-Smith in her report [Race in the workplace](#) to eliminate racial discrimination in the workplace.

Answered by: Lord Prior of Brampton | Department: Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

The business case for action has been made. While we know that many companies are already taking forward some of the recommended actions, more needs to be done. We set out in the Government response that we will be working with Business in the Community in supporting companies to make these changes including developing a simple guide on how to discuss race in the workplace, ensuring easy access to an online portal of best practice and celebrating success through a list of the top 100 BME employers. We will also monitor progress through the new Diversity and Inclusion Group, chaired by my hon. Friend the Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Corporate Responsibility.

9 March 2017 | Written questions | HL 5753

[Hate Crime](#)

Asked by: Lord Beecham

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will implement the recommendation made by the Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination to collect systemically disaggregated data on hate crimes.

Answered by: Baroness Williams of Trafford | Home Office

There is no current intention to disaggregate hate crime data on the grounds of race, but we will keep that under review. Since 2010, we have improved police recording of hate crime. Forces now capture data on all five of the monitored hate crime strands, and from April this year,

forces have started to disaggregate hate crime data on the grounds of religion.

We have noted the findings of the Council of Europe's European Commission on Racism and Intolerance following an inspection of the United Kingdom earlier this year. The Government's full response to the report can be found as an annex to the publication.

We are clear that there is no excuse for hate crime against anyone of any nationality, ethnicity or religious background - it has no place whatsoever in our diverse society. This commitment is underpinned by some of the strongest legislation in the world.

We welcome that the Commission has recognised the strength of our new hate crime action plan which will help reduce hate crime, increase reporting and improve support for victims. The hate crime action plan contains specific measures to increase the rate of prosecution and ensure that enhanced sentencing powers are used where appropriate.

These measures include refreshed Crown Prosecution Service policy and legal guidance for prosecutors on racially and religiously aggravated crime and on prosecuting social media cases, and publicising convictions and information on enhanced sentencing outcomes.

24 October 2016 | Written questions | HL 2091

[International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#)

Asked by: Anne Main

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what plans the Government have to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Answered by: Shahid Malik | Department: Communities and Local Government

The Government are working to build a fairer, more equal society, where a person's chances and opportunities in life are determined solely by their talent and effort-not by their class, gender, religion or race. We are tackling race inequality by enforcing the strong legal framework, promoting clear leadership in public bodies and focusing work on race across Government.

To mark the United Nations' International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on 21 March, on 22 March the British embassy in Bucharest hosted an event for NGOs, civil society and the media on anti-discrimination and tackling racism. Ambassador Robin Barnett and the Romanian Minister for Education both spoke at this event.

On 19 March, ambassador Peter Gooderham, the UK's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva, attended a screening of the film "Colour Blind" hosted by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights at the United Nations in Geneva. During the subsequent panel discussion, ambassador Gooderham reaffirmed our commitment to tackle racism both in the UK and internationally.

6 April 2010 | Written questions | 320956

4. Organisations and further reading

United Nations documents, from International Day [resources](#) page

[International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination \(ICERD\)](#) , Resolution 2106 (XX), 1965

[Resolution proclaiming 21 March as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#) , A/RES/2142 (XXI), 1966

[Resolution proclaiming the Week of Solidarity with the Peoples Struggling against Racism and Racial Discrimination](#) , A/RES/34/24, 1979

[Durban Declaration and Programme of Action](#) , 2001

[Outcome document of the Durban Review Conference](#) , 2009

[Political Declaration adopted at the 10-year anniversary of the Durban Conference](#) , 2011

[Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Mutuma Ruteere](#) , 2015

United Nations organisations

[Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights](#)

[Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#)

[Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance](#)

[United Nations Human Rights Council](#)

UK documents

Home Affairs Committee, [Hate crime and its violent consequences inquiry](#)

Baroness McGregor-Smith, [Race in the workplace: the McGregor-Smith Review and Government response](#) , 28 February 2017

Dame Louise Casey, [The Casey review: a review into opportunity and integration](#) , December 2016

Human Rights Watch, [The human rights implications of Brexit: submission to the UK Parliament Joint Committee on Human Rights](#) , 17 October 2016

Equality and Human Rights Commission, [Healing a divided Britain: the need for a comprehensive race equality strategy](#) , August 2016

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