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**By Email Only**

Dear CERD Committee,

We write urgently to flag the recent report that was published on 31/03/2021 by the United Kingdom's Government: '[Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities: The Report](#)'. We have attached a summary of this report as an annexe to this communication. Amongst other falsehoods, this report categorically denies the existence of institutionalised racism within the United Kingdom and states that the country "should be regarded as a model for other white-majority countries" on race. We find these claims deeply concerning.

In 2020, Prime Minister Boris Johnson established a Commission on Racial Inequalities in response to Black Lives Matter protests taking place in the UK. This Commission was not welcomed by masses of Black, Brown and Racialised Groups in the UK, as the Government has a repeated habit of commissioning (independent) reports into racism and then failing to act on the recommendations. It is also of note that the [1999 Macpherson Report](#), via an independent public inquiry, accepted that institutional racism existed in policing, education and health. In contrast, the chair of the new Race Inequalities Commission (hand-picked by the UK Government), Tony Sewell, has previously argued that the evidence for institutional racism was "flimsy", that Black Caribbean boys were held back by "a victim mentality", and that their behaviour, not racism, was to blame for poorer educational outcomes. Due to the views held by Chair, this appointment was further challenged by a civil society organisation called the [Monitoring Group](#) who believe, as do we, that "this appointment undermines the very purpose which we are told the Prime Minister seeks to achieve." Accordingly, there was a pre-action engagement towards a [legal challenge](#) by the Group. It is clear to us at BLAM UK that the UK Government tactically chose those who would be charged with leading this report, to ensure it could be absolved of the institutionalised racially discriminatory outcomes rampant in all sectors of society.

It is shocking and wholly unacceptable to see that even after the 2001 UN World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination that declared the transatlantic slave trade was a crime against humanity; the UK Government Report deems it appropriate to completely dismiss its horror and ills, going so far as to say that Black people benefitted from slavery, as they ultimately became "British Africans". This comment falls firmly within the sentiments used to support the idea of colonisation and scientific racism and it suggests that for the kidnapped Africans, life on the continent was inadequate and less than. The

generational and historical trauma carried by Black people in modern Britain and the systemic & institutionalised racism that founded itself in the transatlantic slave trade, is cruelly and ignorantly dismissed by a report commission from a political party, whose leader called Black people 'piccaninnies' with 'watermelon smiles'.

It was only five months ago that a Parliamentary [Joint Human Rights Committee](#) released a report investigating the human rights situation of Black people in the UK. The sub-section on maternal mortality reported that the UK's National Health Service "regrets" the disparity in deaths during childbirth between white and Black women, but that it "has no target" to end it. Currently, Black women are five times more likely to die in childbirth than white women - and the United Kingdom's Government has no plans to change this.

We continuously watch the effects of institutionalised and systemic racism in policing play out in our everyday lives: a disproportionate number of Black people are targeted by the police through stop-and-search, inappropriate arrests, and the unnecessary use of force:

- Outside of London, Black people are 43 times more likely to be stopped and searched without justification than white people.
- The Guardian reported in December 2020 that Black people are five times more likely to have force used on them by police.
- The Independent reported in 2017 that 'while black people account for just 3 per cent of the UK population, they make up 12 per cent of people in prison.'

The Institute of Race Relations reports that BAME groups are significantly overrepresented in the prison system, with approximately 25 percent of the overall prison population from a BAME community. Their 2014 report 'Dying for Justice' found that of 509 people that died in police custody, over half of these were Black people. Of the 157 people who died following police contact, 57% of those were Black. Of the 358 deaths that took place in prison, over half of these were Black people. The disproportionality is clear.

This targeting of Black people has been documented over and over again, and recently. Publications from the [Runnymede Trust](#), and reports such as the [Timpson Review](#) and the [Lammy Review](#), illustrate that Black people are still being discriminated against in contemporary Britain. As previously mentioned, the government continues to acknowledge such reports, but ultimately fails to implement the suggested changes: since the publication of the Lammy Review in 2017, the proportion of the UK's youth custody population who come from BAME backgrounds has actually increased.

In addition to the persistent discrimination as a result of institutionalised and systemic racism, it is now becoming clear that our fundamental right to protest such discrimination is being purposefully hindered by this same Government. The passing of the Policing, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill not only includes restrictions on the ability to peacefully protest, but it also strengthens existing stop and search powers among other notions that will reproduce racially disproportionate outcomes for Black people in the UK.

We understand that these measures will undoubtedly target people of African descent disproportionately, and we believe that the UK government is aware of this. The Policing, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill arrives merely ten months after the murder of George Floyd and the resurgence of frequent Black Lives Matter protests. The government was vocal in their dismissal of protesters, with the Prime Minister and Home Secretary describing them as "[s]ubverted by thuggery" and "[t]hugs and criminals", only furthering a racist coded narrative aimed at demonising, harming and diminishing Black people.

The United Kingdom has international legal obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) to rescind and nullify any laws that may cause racial discrimination. We believe that the Government has failed to do so and at this point is legislating overtly, laws that will further entrench racial discrimination in the UK, and reports to inform race in this country with clear racist undertones. We can see that the UK Government, via the 'Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities: The Report', is currently at the stage of even denying that racially discriminatory outcomes, founded within institutions, exist for racialised groups in the UK. The willing ignorance, wide-spread racism and recklessness of the UK Government is extremely worrying and unacceptable for Black people living in the UK.

We believe this report will be used to validate the Government's current strategy which can only be understood as a colourblind approach to race. This not only violates a number of legal obligations under ICERD but it also gives rise to the triggering of this Committee's Urgent Action Procedure. The report and current response by the Government and those within positions of power notability triggers Para: C(A)- Presence of a significant and persistent pattern of racial discrimination, as evidenced in social and economic indicators;

C(E) (F) : Policies or practice of impunity regarding: (a) Violence targeting members of a group identified on the basis of race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin by State officials or private actors; (b) Grave statements by political leaders/prominent people that condone or justify violence against a group identified on the ground of race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin;

This report has the potential to validate racist narratives held by alt-right members of the public. The disturbing resurgence of neo-Nazis, 'All Lives Matter' groups and far-right 'political' parties means that there is certainly a demographic that can use the outcomes of this report to justify and further their own racially motivated agenda. The impact that this will have on Black people and people of colour in the United Kingdom cannot be overstated - lives are at risk. We ask that the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination issues an early warning to the United Kingdom as a result of the publication of this report.

We invite the committee to adopt a decision that includes the expression of specific concerns, along with recommendations for action, addressed to The State party and Other relevant human rights bodies or special procedures of the Human Rights Council.

BLAM UK

BLAM UK ( Black Learning Achievement and Mental Health) is a UK based civil society organisation that works on improving outcomes for Black people through focusing on cultural education projects, community advocacy and racial wellness.