

March 21, 2019

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Re: Invitation to UN Special Rapporteur on Racism

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write to urge you to extend an invitation to Professor E. Tendayi Achiume, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance (“Special Rapporteur on Racism”), to conduct an official fact-finding visit to examine the historic and present marks of racism and racial discrimination that have presented new and renewed, alarming trends of racism in the United States. With this letter we bring an opportunity for us to work together during this Quad-Centennial of the arrival of African peoples from Angola to the USA in 1619.

As you may be aware, the last Special Rapporteur on Racism visit to the United States was in 2008 at the invitation of the George W. Bush administration. That timely visit enjoyed bi-partisan support. In his report to the Human Rights Council, Mr. Doudou Diène, then the Special Rapporteur noted:

Racism and racial discrimination have profoundly and lastingly marked and structured American society. The U.S. has made decisive progress. However, the historical, cultural and human depth of racism still permeates all dimensions of life and American society.

Mr. Diène made a list of recommendations to the federal, state and local governments urging them to double their efforts to fight racism and racial discrimination.¹ Many of his recommendations were echoed by several other regional and international human rights bodies who reviewed the United States record on combatting racism, including the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination,² the U.N. Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent,³ the Inter-American Commission on Human

¹ Doudou Diène, *Report Submitted By the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance*, Doudou Diène, on his mission to the United States of America (April 28, 2009), available at <http://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?Open&DS=A/HRC/11/36/Add.3&Lang=E>.

² Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, *Concluding observations on the combined seventh to ninth periodic reports of the United States of America* (Sept. 25, 2014), available at <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/235644.pdf>.

³ Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, *Report of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent on its mission to the United States of America* (Aug. 18, 2016), available at http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/33/61/Add.2.

Rights,⁴ as well as the 2010 and 2014 Universal Periodic Reviews (UPR) of the United States.⁵

While the United States' periodic report to the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has yet to be submitted—16 months past the deadline—the U.S. expressed its commitment “to fighting racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance” in a statement made before the United Nations Third Committee of the General Assembly last November. A U.S. Representative assured other countries that the United States “continues to implement the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.”⁶ Furthermore, the United States has conveyed the importance of engaging with international human rights bodies to denounce and fight against racism:

“We work with civil society, international mechanisms, and all nations of goodwill to combat racism and racial discrimination. It is an integral aspect of our aspiration to ‘build a more perfect union.’”

The U.S. has also expressed its support of the current International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024), which calls for reparatory justice through the national, regional, and international legal frameworks for generations of involuntary servitude, socioeconomic subjugation, and racial discrimination.

While we appreciate the U.S.'s stated commitment to fighting racism, we believe that commitment ought to manifest itself in tangible actions rather than only words. We are deeply concerned by credible reports indicating a frightening resurgence in white supremacy, which has led to a rise in racism and hate crimes against racial, ethnic, and religious minority communities both in the US and abroad as evidenced by the recent horrific and unspeakable mass murder in New Zealand. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center's 2018 annual report on hate and extremism in the United States, there has been “a 30 percent increase in U.S. hate groups over the past four years and a 7 percent increase in hate groups in 2018 alone.”⁷

⁴ See “Inter-American Commission on Human Rights Holds Hearings on Racism, U.S. Criminal Justice System, Social Protests in Mexico, the Internet, and Other Human Rights Issues,” International Justice Resource Center (Oct. 29, 2014), *available at* <https://ijrcenter.org/2014/10/29/inter-american-commission-on-human-rights-holds-hearings-on-racism-in-u-s-criminal-justice-system-social-protests-in-mexico-the-internet-and-other-human-rights-issues>.

⁵ See “2011 Universal Periodic Review,” U.S. Department of State, *available at* <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/upr/archive/index.htm>; and “2014 Universal Periodic Review,” U.S. Department of State, *available at* <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/upr/2015/index.htm>.

⁶ See “Third Committee Approves 13 Drafts on Persons with Disabilities, Ageing, Human Trafficking amid Protracted Votes on Human Rights in Syria, Myanmar,” United Nations (Nov. 16, 2018), *available at* <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/gashc4254.doc.htm>.

⁷ See Leila Fadel, “U.S. Hate Groups Rose 30 Percent In Recent Years, Watchdog Group Reports,” NPR (Feb. 20, 2019), *available at* <https://www.npr.org/2019/02/20/696217158/u-s-hate-groups-rose-sharply-in-recent-years-watchdog-group-reports>.

We are equally concerned about the rise of misogyny, homophobia, transphobia and anti-immigrant sentiments which have continued to escalate across the United States since the last U.S. presidential election. A May 2018 report released by the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University at San Bernardino found that incidents of hate crimes reached the “highest level in more than a decade” in the largest cities in the United States.⁸ A recent report by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Contemporary Civil Rights Challenges: A View from the States*, affirms that across the country lack of enforcement of civil rights protections on the basis of race and color are a significant concern.⁹

An official visit by the Special Rapporteur on Racism to the United States during this timely season will give her an opportunity to gather information, meet with officials and civil society organizations and directly impacted communities, and offer an assessment and recommendations for effectively fighting the deeply rooted issues of racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and other forms of xenophobia and bigotry in the United States.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact:
Rev. Aundreia Alexander, Associate General Secretary for Action and Advocacy at the National Council of Churches of Christ, USA
at aundreia.alexander@nationalcouncilofchurches.us or at 202-481-6928
or Mr. Jamil Dakwar, Director of the Human Rights Program at the American Civil Liberties Union either at jdakwar@aclu.org or at 212-519-7850

We thank you in advance for your attention to this letter.

Sincerely,

A Just Future
African American Ministers In Action
Albany Law School
Alliance of Baptists
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
Amnesty International USA
Bayard Rustin Liberation Initiative
Bread for the World
Campaign for Youth Justice
Cardozo Law Human Rights and Atrocity Prevention Clinic
Center for Reproductive Rights
Center for the Human Rights of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

⁸ See Abigail Hauslohner, “Hate crimes jump for fourth straight year in largest U.S. cities, study shows,” Washington Post (May 11, 2018), available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2018/05/11/hate-crime-rates-are-still-on-the-rise/?utm_term=.89da2b7c60c1.

⁹ See <https://www.usccr.gov/pubs/2018/09-07-Contemporary-Civil-Rights-Challenges.pdf>, at page 5.

Christian Methodist Episcopal Church
Church of the Brethren Office of Peacebuilding and Policy
College and Community Fellowship
Coloradans For Immigrant Rights
Columbia Law School Human Rights Institute
Conference of National Black Churches
Conference of Superiors of Men (Catholic)
Congregation of Our Lady of the Good Shepherd, US Provinces
Defending Rights & Dissent
Disciples Center for Public Witness (Disciples of Christ)
Ecumenical Advocacy Days for Global Peace with Justice
Ecumenical Poverty Initiative
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Faith Voices Arkansas
Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR USA)
Four Freedoms Forum
Free Minds Book Club & Writing Workshop
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Fund for Leadership, Equity, Access and Diversity
General Board of Church and Society, The United Methodist Church
General Commission on Religion and Race, The United Methodist Church
Higher Ground Change Strategies
Human Rights Watch
ICCC
International CURE
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Justice Roundtable
Justice Strategies
Lott Carey Global Missions Society
Malcolm X Center for Self Determination
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office
Million Hoodies Movement for Justice
Mommieactivist and Sons
Moravian Church Northern Province
Mountain View Friends Meeting
NAACP
National Action Network
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Council of Churches
National Council on Independent Living
National Jericho Movement
National Juvenile Justice Network
National LGBTQ Task Force
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Pan African Women's Ecumenical Empowerment Network (PAWEEN)
Pax Christi USA

Poverty & Race Research Action Council
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Racial Justice NOW!
Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference
Santa Clara Law - International Human Rights Clinic
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Institute Justice Team
Social Justice Action of St. Boniface Church
Southern Poverty Law Center
Students for Sensible Drug Policy
Sunny Slaughter Consulting, LLC
Swedenborgian Church of North America
The Advocates for Human Rights
The Daniel Initiative
The Episcopal Church
The Franklin Law Group, P.C.
The Law Firm of Miccio McDaniel & Pelosi
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
The National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls
The Promise Institute for Human Rights at UCLA School of Law
The Sentencing Project
The Shalom Center
The Taifa Group
Thurgood Marshall Civil Rights Center at Howard University Law School
Transformative Justice Coalition
Union for Reform Judaism
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
US Human Rights Network
Washington Office on Latin America
Women's All Points Bulletin, WAPB
Woodhull Freedom Foundation
YWCA USA