



**International Convention
on the Elimination
of all Forms of
Racial Discrimination**

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION
OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION
Sixty-third session
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CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES
PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 9 OF THE CONVENTION

Concluding observations of the Committee on the
Elimination of Racial Discrimination

UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

1. The Committee considered the sixteenth and seventeenth periodic reports of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, which were due on 6 April 2000 and 2002 respectively, submitted as one document (CERD/C/430/Add.3), at its 1588th and 1589th meetings (CERD/C/SR/1588 and 1589), held on 6 and 7 August 2003. At its 1607th... meeting, held on 20 August 2003..., it adopted the following concluding observations.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee welcomes the detailed report submitted by the State Party and expresses its appreciation for the constructive responses of the delegation to the questions asked during the consideration of the report. Furthermore, the Committee welcomes the fact that non-governmental organizations were consulted in the preparation of the report.

3. While the Committee notes with appreciation that the State Party addressed most of the concerns and recommendations raised

in the Committee's previous concluding observations (CERD/C/304/Add.102), it observes that the report does not fully conform to the Committee's reporting guidelines.

B. Positive aspects

4. The Committee welcomes the Race Relations Amendment Act of 2000 (RRAA), which strengthens the 1976 Race Relations Act by outlawing discrimination in all public authority functions, including the police, as well as the Race Relations Act (Amendment) Regulations of 2003, which widen the definition of indirect discrimination and shift the burden of proof from the victim to the alleged offender.
5. The Committee commends the State Party's efforts to address more stringently the issue of incitement to racial hatred, including the introduction of a mechanism whereby the Metropolitan Police will provide a central advice point for all forces in England and Wales in relation to possible offences of incitement to racial hatred, as well as the increase in the maximum penalty for incitement to racial hatred from two to seven years imprisonment under the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001.
6. The Committee welcomes the Police Reform Act, which includes provisions to create a new and more effective police complaints system in England and Wales; the establishment of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland; and the consultations in Scotland on enhancing the independence of the Police Complaints System.
7. The Committee welcomes the establishment of a Community Cohesion Unit within the Home Office, tasked with carrying forward the Government's programme to encourage the building and strengthening of cohesive communities.
8. The Committee welcomes the establishment of the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) in 2000, as an important step in providing support to eligible asylum seekers and ensuring that they can access necessary services.
9. The Committee commends the State party's efforts to prepare a National Plan of Action against Racism, in consultation with non-governmental organizations, in pursuance of the recommendations of the 2001 World Conference against Racism.
10. The Committee takes note with satisfaction that St. Helena, the British Virgin Islands and the Cayman Islands will include a specific prohibition of racial and other discrimination as well as the necessary enforcement machinery in their Constitutions.

C. Concerns and recommendations

11. The Committee takes note of the State Party's position regarding the non-inclusion of the full substance of the Convention within the State Party's domestic legal order and that there is no obligation for States Parties to make the Convention itself part of their domestic legal order. It is concerned that the State Party's courts will not give legal effect to the provisions of the Convention unless the Convention is expressly incorporated into its domestic law or the State Party adopts necessary provisions in its legislation.

The Committee recommends that the State Party review its legislation in order to give full effect to the provisions of the Convention in its domestic legal order.

12. The Committee also reiterates its concern over the fact that the State Party continues to uphold its restrictive interpretation of the provisions of article 4 of the Convention. It recalls that such interpretation is in conflict with the State Party's obligations under article 4(b) of the Convention and draws the State Party's attention to the Committee's General Recommendation XV according to which the provisions of article 4 are of a mandatory character.

In the light of the State Party's recognition that the right to freedom of expression and opinion are not absolute rights and in the light of statements by some public officials and media reports which may adversely influence racial harmony, the Committee recommends that the State Party reconsider its interpretation of article 4.

13. The Committee is concerned about the increasing racial prejudice against ethnic minorities, asylum seekers and immigrants reflected in the media and the reported lack of effectiveness of the Press Complaints Commission to deal with this issue.

The Committee recommends that the State Party consider further how the Press Complaints Commission could be made more effective and could be further empowered to consider complaints received from the Commission for Racial Equality as well as other groups or organizations working in the field of race relations.

The Committee further recommends that the State Party include in its next report more detailed information on the number of complaints received for racial offences as well as the outcome of such cases brought before the courts.

14. The Committee remains concerned by reports of attacks on

asylum seekers. In this regard, the Committee notes with concern that antagonism towards asylum seekers has helped to sustain support for extremist political opinions.

The Committee recommends that the State Party adopt further measures and intensify its efforts to counter racial tensions generated through asylum issues, inter alia by developing public education programmes and promoting positive images of ethnic minorities, asylum seekers and immigrants, as well as measures making the asylum procedures more equitable, efficient and unbiased.

15. While noting the rapid implementation in domestic law of the European Race Directive, the Committee is concerned that, unlike the Race Relations Act, the amending regulation does not cover discrimination on grounds of colour or nationality. The Committee is therefore concerned that the emerging situation may lead to inconsistencies in discrimination laws, differential levels of protection according to the categorization of discrimination (i.e. race, ethnic origin, color, nationality etc.), and create difficulties for the general public as well as law enforcement agencies.

The Committee recommends that the State Party extend the amending regulations to cover discrimination on the grounds of colour and nationality. In this context, the Committee also recommends that the State Party consider introducing a single comprehensive law consolidating primary and secondary legislations, to provide for the same protection from all forms of racial discrimination, as enshrined in article 1 of the Convention.

16. The Committee is concerned about the application of Section 19 D of the Race Relations Amendment Act of 2000 (RRAA), which makes it lawful for immigration officers to "discriminate" on the basis of nationality or ethnic origin provided that it is authorized by a Minister. This would be incompatible with the very principle of non-discrimination.

The Committee recommends that the State Party consider reformulating or repealing Section 19 D of the RRAA in order to ensure full compliance with the Convention.

17. The Committee is deeply concerned about provisions of the Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act which provide for the indefinite detention without charge or trial, pending deportation, of non-UK nationals who are suspected of terrorism-related activities.

While acknowledging the State Party's national security concerns, the Committee recommends that the State Party seek to balance those concerns with the protection of human rights

and its international legal obligations. In this regard, it draws the State Party's attention to the Committee's statement of 8 March 2002 in which it underlines the obligation of States to "ensure that measures taken in the struggle against terrorism do not discriminate in purpose or effect on grounds of race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin".

18. While the Committee welcomes the initiatives taken for further reforms within the police force, including enhanced representation of ethnic minorities, it recalls its previous concerns about the disproportionately high incidence of deaths in custody of members of ethnic or racial minority groups.

The Committee invites the State Party to submit in its next periodic report detailed information on the new police complaints system; the new Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) which will be fully operational from April 2004; the number of complaints involving racial discrimination referred to the IPCC, including deaths in custody; and the outcome of these complaints as well as the disciplinary measures taken in each case. It also encourages the State Party to adopt measures conducive to integrating the different ethnic and racial representation within the police force.

19. The Committee is concerned that a disproportionately high number of "stops and searches" are carried out by the police against members of ethnic or racial minorities.

The Committee encourages the State Party to implement effectively its decision to ensure that all "stops and searches" are recorded and to give a copy of the record form to the person concerned. The Committee invites the State Party to address this issue in more detail in its next periodic report.

20. The Committee notes that the State Party recognizes the intersectionality of race and religious discrimination, as illustrated by the prohibitions of discrimination of an ethnic nature against such communities as Jews and Sikhs and recommends that religious discrimination against other immigrant religious minorities be likewise prohibited.

The Committee is concerned about reported cases of "Islamophobia" following the September 11th attacks. Furthermore, while the Committee takes note that the State Party's criminal legislation includes offences where religious motives are an aggravating factor, it regrets that incitement to racially motivated religious hatred is not outlawed.

The Committee recommends that the State Party give early consideration to the extension of the crime of incitement to

racial hatred to cover offences motivated by religious hatred against immigrant communities.

21. While reiterating its satisfaction in connection with the enactment of the Human Rights Act of 1998, the Committee notes that no central body has been established to implement the Act. The Committee considers that the absence of such a body may undermine the effectiveness of the Act.

The Committee invites reference to the earlier commitment of the State Party to consider establishing a Human Rights Commission in order to enforce the Act and the possibility to empower such a Commission with comprehensive competence to review complaints of human rights violations, and recommends early decision in this regard.

22. The Committee expresses concern about the discrimination faced by Roma/Gypsies/Travellers, which is reflected, inter alia, in their higher child mortality rate, exclusion from schools, shorter life expectancy than the population average, poor housing conditions, lack of available camping sites, high unemployment rate, and limited access to health services.

The Committee draws the attention of the State Party to its General Recommendation XXVII on discrimination against Roma and recommends that the State Party develop further appropriate modalities of communication and dialogue between Roma/Gypsy/Traveller communities and central authorities. It also recommends that the State Party adopt national strategies and programmes with a view to improving the situation of the Roma/Gypsies/Travellers against discrimination by State bodies, persons or organization.

23. The Committee reiterates its concern that besides the Roma/Gypsy/Traveller populations, certain other minority groups or individuals belonging to them experience discrimination in the areas of employment, education, housing and health.

The Committee urges the State party to continue taking affirmative measures in accordance with article 2, paragraph 2, of the Convention to ensure equal opportunities for full enjoyment of their economic, social and cultural rights. Moreover, the Committee encourages the State Party to submit in its next periodic report more detailed information on achievements under the State Party's programmes aimed at narrowing the employment gap and improving housing conditions among different ethnic groups.

24. The Committee recalls its General Recommendation XXIX, in which the Committee condemns descent-based discrimination, such as discrimination on the basis of caste and analogous systems of

inherited status, as a violation of the Convention, and recommends that a prohibition against such discrimination be included in domestic legislation.

The Committee would welcome information on this issue in the next periodic report.

25. The Committee regrets that no information on the implementation of the Convention in the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) was provided in the State Party's report.

The Committee looks forward to receiving in its next periodic report information on the measures taken by the State Party to ensure the adequate development and protection of the Ilois for the purpose of guaranteeing their full and equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with article 2, paragraph 2, of the Convention.

26. The Committee encourages the State party to continue to consult with organizations of civil society working in the area of combating racial discrimination and during the preparation of the next periodic report.

27. The Committee notes that the State Party is currently reviewing the possibility of making the optional declaration provided for in article 14 of the Convention, and invites the State Party to give a high priority to such a review and to favorably consider making this declaration.

28. The Committee recommends that the State party take into account the relevant parts of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, and that it include in its next periodic report updated information on the action plan that it is in the process of drafting in order to implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action at national level.

29. The Committee recommends that the State party's reports be made readily available to the public from the time they are submitted and that the observations of the Committee on these reports be similarly publicized.

30. The Committee recommends that the State party submit its eighteenth and nineteenth periodic reports combined, due on 6 April 2006, and that it address all points raised in the present concluding observations.
