**Elizka’ submission on**

**“Systemic Racism in Africa”**

**Introduction**

Racism is not always a tangible phenomenon and is often systemic and structural. Systemic and structural racism is a form of racism that is deeply pervasive and ingrained in established systems, laws, written or unwritten policies, and practices. It produces, condones, and perpetuates widespread unfair treatment and oppression of different people, leading to dire consequences.

Segregation of accommodation, unfair lending practices, and other barriers to home ownership and wealth accumulation are only few examples of such racist practices. These examples also include schools’ reliance on local property taxes, environmental injustice, biased police, prosecution of men and boys of color, and voter suppression policies.

Structural racism is a system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms operate differently, often reinforcing inequality between racial groups. Structural racism is not something that a few people or institutions choose but rather a feature of the social, economic, and political systems in which we all live.

**First: Models of structural racism in a number of African countries**

There is no doubt that racism has existed in the African continent since colonialism. The colonial powers - the mainstay of structural racism in Africa - resorted to classification, marginalization, and other practices. These practices rooted the systemic racism in many African countries. Hate speeches against gender, race, or religion have also played a significant role. We can list some examples of African people suffering from systemic racism in their countries.

1. **The population of Pygmy in Central Africa, specifically around the Congo Basin**

The ethnic Pygmy population in Central Africa suffers from racial discrimination by the Bantu people, who enslave them to this day. This group is prevented from participating in the communities they live in across Africa, and are considered outcasts. They are also subject to racially motivated attacks, rape, murder, and torture.

During the Coronavirus pandemic, Africa’s Indigenous Pygmy Populations suffered huge losses, due to the government’s negligence of the dense forests where they live; as they were removed illegally without accountability. There was also a lack of policies or initiatives to monitor their health throughout the Congo Basin. The mortality rate of the Pygmy population was 1.5 to 4 times higher than the population of the neighboring tribes[[1]](#footnote-1).

1. **Ethnic discrimination in Ethiopia**

During the Tigray war that broke out in November 2020, ethnic profiling haunted the Tigrayans, and the Ethiopian government took many forms of structural racism against the Tigrayans. The government prevented them from using Ethiopian Airlines, rejected permissions from the board of directors, banned them from traveling abroad, and forced the Tigrayans to take time off work. It also asked all government agencies and NGOs to remove all Tigrayans from the aid lists from the World Food Program office.

Federal security searched their homes and forced them to leave them arbitrarily, suspended their bank accounts, disarmed the Tigrayan members of the UN peacekeeping missions with the African Union in Somalia, and returned some to Ethiopia forcibly[[2]](#footnote-2).

The government arrested about 700 Tigrayans in Addis Ababa in November 2020, dropping to around 300 in December 2020 on suspicion of links with the Tigray People's Liberation Front.

In April 2021, the government held 500 Tigrayans in a detention center in Addis Ababa. That was interpreted as arbitrary detention based on ethnic identity in detention conditions contrary to international standards; it held more than 30 people in a single detention room. In July 2021, there were further arrests of Tigrayan activists and journalists, which the Federal Police denied and said we only arrested war participants.

In early November 2021, the government arrested Tigrayans, dozens of priests, monks, and deacons, and it arrested other Tigrayans in Addis Ababa, many of whom had no relations with the rebels or even affinity with them including mothers with children and the elderly.

Since November 2021, online hate speech has increased, with journalists, politicians, and pro-government activists using hate speech on online social media, calling ethnic Tigrisians "traitors" and calling on the government to bring them to prompt trials for treason. [[3]](#footnote-3)

1. **Clan system in Somalia**

The clan system in Somalia is highly racist. So, the difference between clans does not depend on discrimination in governance or housing. Those from different clans become enemies, subjected to killing and violation despite the similarity of these clans in language, customs, traditions, and even in their way of life. The other is an enemy.

Minorities make up 32% (4.8 million people as of 2020) of the Somali population, estimated to number about 15 million Somalis. The minority thus represents a large Somali population, yet they are at risk of violence and discrimination due to their considered enemies.

It is important to note that under ideal conditions in most conflict areas of Somalia, minority groups are subject to much more violence and discrimination than when they live in a non-conflict region, such as Somaliland, where there is relative peace and social inclusion. Yet, even in relatively peaceful Somaliland, minority groups continue to suffer from violence and discrimination.

The Somali Bantu minority faces significant stigma in Somali society due to their different physical appearance and ancestry from the majority of Cushitic origin in Somalia. Racial nicknames targeting the Somali Bantu community, such as adoon, are also used. The marginalization of the Somali Bantu community is based primarily on ethnic factors, in contrast to the marginalization of the Madhiban community and other Somali minorities, which is based primarily on their status as a heterogeneous social caste. Also, over the past years, there have been racially motivated attacks on the Somali Bantu, and journalists who draw attention to discrimination against the Somali Bantu have suffered death threats, so some have fled the country. [[4]](#footnote-4)

**Second: Motives of Structural Racism in Africa**

"Racism" is the belief that a person's race is a "primary determinant" of one's traits and abilities in the real world. That has led to persistent and pernicious beliefs about the superior and inferior races of tribes and societies over others. Racism is also the "systematic oppression" of an ethnic group which gives other groups a social, economic, and political advantage.

There are many causes of structural racism in Africa, including:

1. **Personal interests and gain**

Personal gain is one of the most justifications for structural racism in Africa. In Ethiopia, the current federal government justified the racist behavior by the desire to monopolize the country's political and economic gains against other ethnicities. Even if some use weapons and resist the government, deterrence cannot include all members, mainly civilians without arms.

1. **Boasting of genealogy and insulting others**

This crisis is widespread in some African countries, where one of the clans boasts of their lineage and origin over other clans in the State of Mauritania. For example, although laws criminalizing slavery and racism against a particular sect passed over the years, the Black Moors suffer from structural racism against them. They are treated like slaves at work, not entitled to claim any rights not granted to them by their masters, and no one gets a political or economic position in the state; they are in a class inferior to everyone[[5]](#footnote-5).

1. **internal conflicts**

Internal conflicts fuel structural racism; directly and indirectly, the participation of a member of a minority who is already suffering from racism and oppression, whether from the society itself or the government, may be a pretext for increasing the harassment of this oppressed group. Moreover, the internal conflicts in the continent undermine all peace efforts, which may also positively affect the manifestations of racism and push toward more coexistence among all groups and tribes**.**

**Conclusion**

The negative aspects of structural racism affect individuals and society. Racism generates malice and hatred between the racist and the victim. The person subjected to racism is rejected in all development roles and participation. It makes the person subjected to racism a lonely and outcast person who lives far from others. Racism limits the understanding of the person who practices it because he is interested in himself, away from the feelings of others.

As for the impact of racism on societies, it makes them loose and unconnected and creates conflicts between members. Racism creates hatred and animosity among its members. Racism also creates fear, repression, and instability. It may ignite a war in society, for each sect to become intolerant of its ideas.

Therefore, in this context, Elizka Relief Foundation presents a set of recommendations:

* First: Elizka appreciates the efforts of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee in the field of research by presenting a comprehensive study on structural racism. In this context, Elizka calls on all stakeholders who suffer from the persistence of racial discrimination practices to respond to Resolution No. 48/18 and to participate in drafting a comprehensive study that includes specific recommendations to reduce structural forms of racism and support ways of equality and peaceful coexistence.
* Second: Elizka calls for taking urgent measures against the Ethiopian federal government, which practices structural racism against the Tigrayans and other ethnicities to achieve political gains for one faction and one race without the other.
* Third: Elizka recommends the Congo River Basin countries work to mitigate the negative impact of racist practices against the Biojmi people and provide them with all rights on an equal basis with all citizens, especially the right to personal security.
* Fourth: Elizka calls for eliminating the roots of structural racism, especially those suffered by Africans, working to strengthen cooperation between the Human Rights Council and the African Union and working to strengthen Resolution No. 47/21[[6]](#footnote-6) by purifying all residues and colonial ideas, which were one of the causes of structural racism; whether faced by Africans inside their own countries or abroad.

1. Julia E. Fa, The COVID-19 Pandemic Endangers Africa’s Indigenous Pygmy Populations, national library of medicine, 2021 May 27, <https://bit.ly/3fncEcM> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ethnic profiling of Tigrayans heightens tensions in Ethiopia, the new humanitarian, 16 December 2020, <https://bit.ly/3fGK2v6> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ethiopia’s crackdown on ethnic Tigrayans snares thousands, reuters, <https://reut.rs/3dYx0sI> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Abdihakim Barre Warsame, Ethnic Prejudice and Discrimination of the Somali Minority Groups, 2020, <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1465450/FULLTEXT01.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The unspeakable truth about slavery in Mauritania, the guardian, <https://bit.ly/3CDwGZL> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. A/HRC/RES/47/21: link: <https://bit.ly/3yrdZGb> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)