

Statement on Reparative Justice for Sexual Crimes against People of African Descendent and Black women in the diaspora and internally displaced people in Africa

Thank you, chairperson, for this opportunity to speak.

I represent Open-Society Africa and together with African civil society we would like to note the grave concern of sexual violence particularly meted out against the bodies of women of African Descendent, particularly black women which includes black lesbian, bisexual, queer and trans women and women with disabilities.

There is a war being waged on women's bodies of African Descendent and this is a serious and grave human rights violation of women's bodily integrity & autonomy. Sexual violence has long been used as a weapon of war which increases during times of political, social and economic instability, conflicts, electoral violence and emergencies, including climatic disasters. Globally there is a rise in authoritarianism, and we have seen forming of alliances by popular nationalism, religious and cultural forces use attacks against women's bodies and LGBTQ women. Global shifts in far right politics have severe implications for gender justice globally – eg overturning Roe v Wade in US, increases in Islamophobia, anti-immigration and white nationalism.

Sexual crimes against women having a devastating impact on their entire lives and women face severe social stigma, rejection, from families and their communities.

Noting what the first speaker mentioned that no person of African descendent should be subjected to violence by the state and non state actors and should exist free from violence and live in safe healthy environments. We therefore call for reparations for sexual crimes against women, non-binary, LBTQI women and women with disabilities of African descendent.

Reparations for sexual crimes require a feminist, survivor-centered, transformative and a holistic approach and must recognise the profound harm which it causes to survivors their families, communities and societies in general.

Therefore, we must take a transformative and intersectional approach to reparative justice and actually change the structural conditions that allow these acts to occur in the first place. We must also address the intersections of racial justice, gender justice and queer liberation.

Reparations for sexual crimes must be survivor centred and survivor led.

There needs to be meaningful participation and consultation with survivors of sexual crimes to ensure that they define reparative justice and reparations.

Further, we call for a feminist analysis that aims to dismantle patriarchy that imposes ideology and priorities for reparations for survivors of sexual violence.

Finally, we implore all actors to recognise the intersection of structural racism and sexual violence, in order to open the door for discourse that would lead to the design of appropriate and effective reparations.

I thank you.

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