The Norwegian Center Against Racism’s input to the draft of United Nations Declaration on the promotion, protection and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent

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# Introduction

The Norwegian Centre Against Racism humbly appreciate that we have been called upon to deliver our input to the scope of a draft United Nations Declaration on the promotion and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent.

In the following paragraphs we will raise issues that we believe should be included in the scope of such a declaration, pertaining the situation of people of African descent residing in Norway, but as we have found, through consultations organized by the working-group, the issues that affect people of African descent are the similar globally even if the manifestations are more severe in some countries.

As Norway places among the top three countries when it comes to freedom of speech we at the Norwegian Center Against Racism feel obliged to highlight also issues that do not relate to a Norwegian context to a great extent.

As the Decade of People of African Descent nears it conclusion it is important to remember that the struggle for rights and against discrimination and oppression cannot be won on schedule. As I were reminded just this month as Angela Davis visited Oslo and told how she and her comrades in the late 60’s, early 70’s were sure they were just on the brink of racial equality. We must remember that the struggle will not be won in a sprint, as it is an ongoing relay marathon. As Angela Davis once wrote; “In a racist world, it is not enough to not be racist, one must be Anti-Racist.”.

There is therefore need for a United Nations Declaration on the promotion and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent, to further this work.

## People of African descent in Norway

According to the Norwegian national statistical bureau 145 000 persons born in Africa or by two parents born in Africa, 2.6 percent of the Norwegian population. The population of people of African descent in Norway are rather young but have an increase in people entering old age. Most people of African descent in Norway live in urban areas, with close to 40 percent residing in the capitol, Oslo.

There are no statistics on people of African descent as the Norwegian government do not produce statistics based on race or ethnicity, but on citizenship so the statistics include only African citizens who have emigrated to Norway and persons born in Norway to parents in the prior group. Hence, we do not have statistics on third-generation Africans in Norway, Afro-Americans, Afro-Europeans, first-generation and beyond for persons of one parent of African and one of Norwegian descent, nor adoptees. Knowing that larger groups of people with African descent established themselves in Norway during the 1980s and 1990s there are a vaste “hidden” number of people with African descent in Norway, that are not visible in statistics.

In an around the capitol of Oslo, a number between 60 000 – 100 000, and a total shy of 200 000, would be a very conservative estimate.

One could say this group are denied their identity in statistics, and as we know statistics are determining for policies.

# Input to the scope of a draft declaration

The input of the Norwegian Center Against Racism to the scope of a draft United Nations Declaration on the promotion and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent are built up in paragraphs where we explore topics that should be included in discussions on a draft, and even a few suggested rights.

## Right to a cultural identity

Our first suggestion is that a right to a cultural identity are included in the draft. As shown with the example of Norway, and we have learned are a global situation, people of African descent are rarely present in statistics. A right of cultural identity would drive the need for statistics on the number of people of African descent in a country or area. This will have both political, infrastructural, socio-economic and cultural implications.

## Political rights

Further we suggest an inclusion of equal right to access to voting and political institutions, as this is an issue reported by several organizations globally. In several countries we know voting are being hindered in areas people of African descent are in majority, well known examples of this are found in USA and Brazil. We further would promote a right to be heard in cases pertaining to people off African descent.

## Judicial rights

The pandemic racial-profiling and reports of police brutality against people of African descent we see worldwide bare witness that structural racism runs rampant in the police branch of most countries. As the BLM-movement highlighted, police-killings are not an American phenomenon as claimed by several European politicians. Even in Norway, where the police are known internationally for their un-confrontational approach, reports of police brutality towards people of African descent are not far apart and done with impunity.

Further we see harsher treatment of people of African descent in the criminal justice system, both in sentencing, where we see racially based disproportionately longer convictions, and in prosecution. With racial-profiling and police focusing on areas populated by people of African descent, there is also a disproportional number of people of African descent being prosecuted. Further minors of African descent are disproportionally tried as adults in several countries

At the same time legal remedies are none existing or hardly accessible in racism and discrimination cases, if there are laws in place against it.

There is a need to discuss rights of fair and equal treatment from the police and judiciary, and access to the effective legal remedies against discrimination and racism for people of African descent.

## Education and childhood

As education and knowledge are pillars of empowerment, the Norwegian Center Against Racism, stresses that a right of education, are included in the draft.

Further on education, we would like to address racism in schools, both structurally and directly towards people of African descent and we would suggest that a right to an education, and a childhood free of racism should be discussed.

## Information and access to media

As people of African descent have historically and presently in several countries are denied access to and information on their own history there are a need to discuss rights on, knowledge of one’s history.

Further we know people of African descent are less represented and their views are given less access in mainstream, private or state-owned, media, and that people of African descent have less access to information pertaining to their lives of this reason. We suggest that the discussions on the draft discuss rights to information and access to media.

## Public services

As international studies and even a recent Norwegian research show, people of African descent are met with discrimination over the entire spectrum of public services to a larger extent than other racialized minorities. There is a need to explore rights addressing this discrimination penetrating healthcare, welfare, and all aspects of public services.

## Rights against discrimination

As most research show people of African descent are discriminated against in the private sector globally. Be it in employment, housing, financial or other. The scope of the draft should include a right not to be discriminated against in the private sector as well as public services.

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