



The Human Rights Council

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
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Call for input – 2023 SG report IDPAD

IRELAND

Dear Sir Madam,

Further to your call for input into Annual Progress Report of the United Nations Secretary-General to be presented to the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session, please note my comments below:

1. It should be noted that, as part of the empire, the role Ireland played in British colonialism, prior to becoming an independent State in 1922 is very often downplayed or underestimated.¹ ² The State's position as the first "colony" of the British empire to fight for and win its independence has rightly endeared itself to other former colonies, especially in Africa. For instance, during the de-colonisation process we saw a high number of African students attend Irish universities and medical colleges, many African students were funded by the Irish State especially in the 1960s.³ Today, Ireland is to be commended for the significant development aid it provides to African States. However, this position does not fully cleanse the State from the legacies and negative mindsets and stereotypes inherited from this colonial past. The Irish State needs to do more at home in its own territory to fully recognise its historical place in colonialism and play its full part in implementing the programme of activities for the International Decade for People of African Descent in respect of the three themes of **Recognition, Justice and Development** for people of African descent.

¹ Colonel Edward Marcus Despard from Co Laois in Ireland fought alongside Horatio Nelson as young men, in the San Juan raid in 1780 against the Spanish in central America (currently Nicaragua).¹ Despard was later to become superintendent of the Bay of Honduras Settlement (later called Belize). Jay M, *The Unfortunate Colonel Despard*, 2019, Clays Ltd Elcograf S.p.A. Great Britain, page 56.

² Sir Charles McCarthy, an Irishman born in Cork, of Irish and French descent, was a British army officer who was appointed in 1812 as a governor of British territories in West Africa. In addition, it is well known that many Irish missionaries travelled to Africa as part of the colonial expansion in the 19th and 20th Centuries.

³ Minister for External Affairs, Mr Aiken, Parliamentary Debate on 27 February 1964, Vol. 207 No. 13, available at < https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/1964-02-27/8/#spk_11 > accessed on 27 April 2023.



2. The Human Rights Council may be aware that on 23 September 2022 a joint Statement was released by nine Special Rapporteurs, in the Special Procedures system, calling on the Irish State to “provide redress for the harms caused due to racial discrimination and systemic racism to which children of African and Irish descent were subjected”⁴ in Irish orphanages and childcare institutions. The mixed race children incarcerated in Irish institutions, in many cases for up to 18 years without adoptive or foster parents, are primarily the children of African descent, who emerged from the legacy of colonialism referred to above. Their African fathers, in most cases returned to Africa to rebuild their newly independent post-colonial States. Although the then Irish Prime Minister, Micheál Martin, provided an acknowledgment in its State Apology⁵ on 13 January 2021, which fits within the theme of **Recognition**, the State continues to deny separate and adequate redress for the racial discrimination and systemic racism in childcare institutions. This is against the spirit of **Justice**, which is one of the three pillars and aspirations of the International Decade for people of African Descent.

I trust the above information will be of interest for your Annual Report.

Yours sincerely

Conrad Bryan

Director

The Association of Mixed Race Irish

⁴ See: < <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/09/ireland-un-experts-call-adequate-redress-systemic-racism-and-racial> >.

⁵ See: < <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2021-01-13/10/#> > accessed on 28 April 2023.