



Anti-Racism Initiative: An International Commission of Inquiry on Racism and Discriminatory Policies and Practices

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Racism continues to problematically influence how we advance transformative infrastructures post-COVID-19. The G20 processes provide an opportunity for leaders to address systemic and structural racism with bold actions. This deserves an explicit priority because of racism's grave social, ethical, economic, legal, political, religious, and spiritual impacts. The interconnected impact of racism and racial prejudice on all Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the ongoing multifaceted COVID-19 emergencies, calls for action by the G20 to take on anti-racism as a central and continuing agenda focus.

The G20 Interfaith Forum, through its Anti-Racism Initiative and other policy work, commits itself to confronting racism in all its forms by taking action to eradicate it. Without attending to this goal, healing, reconciliation, and equity remain unachievable. This call to action reflects a continuation of efforts throughout history to engage racism, discrimination, and injustice.

Recommendations

The G20 Interfaith Forum continues to recommend that the G20 (19 nations and the European Union):

1. Establish an International Commission on Racism, which would act as a solid analytic foundation for continuing action. The goals of this Commission would be:
 - a. To give central prominence to an issue that affects each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals in both national and international relations by tasking the G20 leaders with responsibility to act.
 - b. To assemble a tightly organized, multidisciplinary group of respected states people, scholars, inter-religious leaders, and experts charged with gathering collective wisdom to develop positive action paths.
 - c. To set out specific principles and proposals that will spur appropriate and urgent actions, such as the eradication of racist language and racist legislation that may still exist, as well developing anti-racist legislation.
2. Acknowledge and address the legacy and persistence of systemic racism.
3. Review and revise policies to ensure all individuals are treated equally.ⁱ
4. Embed inclusivity in decision-making processes.
5. Redress inequities in policies that serve as barriers to economic prosperity, good health, and a quality education.ⁱⁱ
6. Eliminate barriers to political participation.

Racism in its Multifaceted Forms is the Crisis of Crises

Racial injustice permeates the many crises that threaten humanity. Its unaddressed root causes threaten the legitimacy of the international order. Racist practices influence policies and structures that undermine international cooperation in vaccine distribution, food security, and climate mitigation and adaptation. Efforts that address racial injustice reinforce the stabilization of the international order and promote economic development.

Contributions of Interfaith Organizations and Communities

Interfaith organizations recognize the importance of acknowledging and addressing the legacy of systemic racism by means of a commission. Although imperfect, commissions provide a principled way of opening up necessary conversations and facing, with honesty and courage, some of the challenges we face in the world. There are historical examples of such commissions in recent history and in several regions of the world, including several in G20 member states. While religious communities have at times been part of the problem, they can also be part of the solution.

As religious communities begin to reclaim their spiritual roots as distinct from their institutional constructs, they may more effectively speak for the needs and aspirations of the over 80% of the human community who have a religious affiliation. The antidote for racism is to accept and embrace the full humanity of every person. This includes the sacredness of human conscience and the full dignity and access to all human rights which are inherent in the world's religious and spiritual traditions. These religious attributes require legal protection and promotion to achieve a culture of respect for human beings.

Concluding Recommendations

To achieve peace among cultures and peace among religions, it is our conviction that the scourge of racism must be addressed. We believe the background and arguments above to present a compelling case. We therefore recommend the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry with members from the G20 (the 19 nations and the European Union). We acknowledge that Commissions of Inquiry of many sorts have a rich history with mixed results. While a Commission of Inquiry's findings and recommendations are not binding, they significantly influence public opinion, shape public policy, and promote healing.

The IF20 urges the leaders of the G20 to consider this recommendation and pledge to commit its considerable networks and resources to its realization.

ⁱ The IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) definition of antisemitism, a non-legally binding intergovernmental statement, has been adopted by 38 countries as well as a wide range of other political entities, including international organizations and a large number of regional/state and local governments. Both the content and adoption process of the IHRA definition may serve as a template for the establishment of the commission mooted in point 1 above.

ⁱⁱ One particularly egregious example of persistent inequities pursuant to political promises has been revealed by the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation): In 2015, a clandestine side deal was made by then Prime Minister Harper and Roman Catholic leaders in Canada absolving the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops of all but a modest portion of their assigned reparations with respect to 'Indian Residential Schools.'