



RUNNYMEDE TRUST PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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RACE EQUALITY ORGANISATIONS RESPOND TO UK GOVERNMENT'S
BOYCOTT OF UN RACISM EVENT

UK NGOs Against Racism statement:

Response to the UK Government's statement on its withdrawal from the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

UK NGOs Against Racism would like to express our disappointment that the UK Government has decided not to attend the high level meeting of the UN General Assembly to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action on 22 September in New York. This event has been described by the UN as 'a chance to strengthen political commitment in fighting racism and racial discrimination'.

Through this decision, the UK Government is missing an opportunity to develop its international reputation on tackling racism and also to demonstrate to its citizens its commitment to work with others to eradicate racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance.

The anti-Semitic rhetoric and behaviour displayed in 2001 and 2009 at the World Conference Against Racism are deeply regrettable; we believe every effort should be made to eradicate anti-Semitism as a very serious form of racism and intolerance. The event in New York is not to commemorate the World Conference Against Racism but the important declaration and programme of action that was agreed in Durban. We and others who oppose racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance value this event as an important opportunity to bring Heads of State together to discuss all forms of racism and racial discrimination which affect millions of victims of worldwide. The Government is fully able to make clear to all interested parties that by attending this event it does not support in any way previous displays of anti-Semitism; indeed the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action explicitly highlight the urgent need to counter anti-Semitism.

We see the UK Government's withdrawal from this event as another indication of a lack of government leadership on race equality. In its statement, the Government claims that the recent examination of the UK by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination demonstrated the Government's commitment to tackling racism. Yet this Committee in fact had 31 concerns and recommendations in relation to the government's policies on tackling racial discrimination, including the absence of any strategy to tackle race inequality.

Jewish communities and organisations have long played a leading role in the UK's anti-racist movement. We believe that efforts to combat racism and anti-Semitism need not be seen as in opposition to each other. As anti-racist organisations concerned with tackling racism and intolerance we remain keen to engage in dialogue with members of the Jewish Human Rights Coalition, government, and others to ensure that together we can make progress towards eliminating racial discrimination in all its forms.

Notes to editors:

1. For press inquiries call Klara Schmitz on 020 7377 9222 or email klara@runnymedetrust.org
2. UK NGOs Against Racism is made up of the Runnymede Trust, Discrimination Law Association, Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities, Equanomics UK, Migrant Rights Network, Just West Yorkshire, Irish Traveller Movement in Britain and Cambridge Racial Incident Support Project.
3. More information on the Government's decision to withdraw from the anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action can be found here: <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=PressS&id=656531982>
4. More information on the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action is available here: <http://www.un.org/en/ga/durbanmeeting2011/pdf/infonote2.pdf>
5. For the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination's recommendations for the UK Government, please see: http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cerd/docs/UK_COBs_CERD79.pdf
6. More information on the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is available here: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cerd/>
7. The Runnymede Trust is a social policy research organisation focused on race equality and race relations. We work by:

- Identifying barriers to race equality and good race relations
- Enabling effective action for social change
- Influencing policy at all levels through providing thought leadership and robust evidence

Further information is available on the Runnymede website:

www.runnymedetrust.org