

UK charities to tell United Nations that Britain is failing to tackle racial inequalities

Today (Tuesday 2nd) a group of organisations, co-ordinated by the Runnymede Trust, travel to the UN in Geneva to address the UK government's response to racial inequalities and discrimination.

They argue that the UK government's current colour-blind approach has no evidence of reducing racial inequalities and that the government may therefore be failing to comply with its responsibilities as a signatory to the UN treaty, the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD).

In response, the UK government under Prime Minister Theresa May needs to take responsibility for making Britain a more racially-equal society, by implementing a wide-ranging race equality strategy and by transposing the UN Convention (in full) into UK law.

Race equality think tank the Runnymede Trust compiled the 83-page report, which is published a day before CERD takes evidence from non-governmental organisations (NGO's) in Geneva.

The submission to the UN calls on the UK Government to take action on institutional and individual racism, which is in the public eye following an upsurge in racism after Brexit.

Dr Omar Khan, Director of the Runnymede Trust who is giving evidence to CERD in Geneva, called on Theresa May to coordinate efforts on race equality following her remarks on the steps of Downing Street condemning discrimination.

NGOs call on the UK Government to:

- Adopt a **race equality strategy** to tackle long-standing inequalities in UK society, across criminal justice, education, employment, health, housing and political participation,
- This strategy should include what the UN calls 'specific measures' for 'vulnerable groups' such as Black people in the criminal justice system and labour market and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller groups in education and health.
- **Establish an independent review of the Prevent duty** to address the possible conflict with equality and human rights laws, providing a clear definition of extremism' to end the disproportionate targeting of Muslim school children;

Dr Omar Khan, Director of the Runnymede Trust, said:

"Our review of the state of race equality in Britain shows there are many areas of persistent and widespread inequality that require urgent action driven by political will at the top of Government. As we seek to develop new trade relationships the UK

needs to demonstrate it has its act in order on tackling racism or risk international embarrassment.

“In this post-Brexit world we must safeguard the rights of BME citizens by fully incorporating the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination into British law. We therefore call on Theresa May to lead from the front and drive through the changes needed to make Britain more racially equal.”

The report also calls for the UK Government to:

- Tackle disproportionate police use of **stop and search** by fully implementing the 2013 HMIC (Inspectorate of Constabulary) review;
- Ensure all Whitehall departments are fully compliant with the UK’s **Public Sector Equality Duty** under the Equality Act 2010; engage with the Equality and Human Rights Commission to develop strong PSED Codes of Practice and give them statutory force;
- Ensure that **private firms in receipt of public money** through contracts (procurement) uphold standards on race equality expected of public authorities;
- Outlaw **caste discrimination** by amending the Equality Act 2010;
- Encourage **all private companies, charities and public authorities to collect ethnic monitoring data** and act on it to improve racial diversity at every level at work;
- Carry out full Equality Impact Assessments on every **Chancellor’s budget** with a specific focus on the likely impact of changes on BME groups;
- **Improve BME access to justice: reinstate legal aid** for education, employment and immigration and audit the impact of recent legal aid changes on BME groups; remove employment tribunal fees;
- Reduce the disproportionate number of **BME young people in the youth offending system, including a** review of the law around ‘joint enterprise’
- Take appropriate action to reduce the gap between BME and White **voter registration and turnout**, and publish data on how individual voter registration has impacted on ethnicity;
- **hate crimes** strategy with a new national strategy on prevention and reporting; and by introducing a stand-alone offence for hate on **social media**;
- Ensure that courts have powers to keep **racially-aggravated** circumstances of a crime on the table when a defendant is willing to plead guilty to the crime but not as a racial offence;
- Offer greater support to schools to tackle **racist bullying**;
- Focus on tackling **rural racism** by working with rural authorities and NGO’s;
- Allow BME groups and citizens to **petition the UN CERD directly** (‘article 14’) as is the case currently on gender and disabilities;
- Develop a new strategy to secure fair and equal treatment for **Roma, Gypsy and Traveller communities** in the areas of education, employment, health and housing;
- Review data around disproportionality in school exclusions for Black Caribbean and Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller pupils;
- Ensure **regeneration schemes** do not exclude BME communities and tackle disproportionate and increasing levels of BME housing overcrowding and homelessness.
- Actively promote the current and historical contribution of BME people and migrants to Britain’s past, present and future, and reject policies and statements that stigmatise and harm ethnic minorities.
- Strengthen national hate crime strategy, including by improving on and expanding support for community groups to tackle racist violence and provide longer-term support for its victims.

- Ensure **universities conduct race equality audits** within their staff and student bodies and use the results to increase racial diversity;
- **Review childcare** to ensure equal-access to childcare schemes for BME parents;
- Commission a yearly report on **race inequalities in health**;

Dr Omar Khan is available for interview on the phone from Geneva.

For interviews call or email Lester Holloway, communications@runnymedetrust.org, 07525 413 139 or 020 7377 9222

Notes to Editors:

The new report can be found here: <http://runnymedetrust.org/projects-and-publications/europe/cerd.html>

The date on the report states June 2016; however the UN is examining the UK this week and provides a formal session for NGOs to contribute their views on the UK's commitment to the convention, and to elimination racial discrimination in all its forms.

United Nation member states which have ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) are expected, under Article 9 of the Convention, to report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) every 2 years. Under ICERD, the UN requires all member states to ensure all laws and policy are non-discriminatory in effect (in reality) not just in intention.

The document follows extensive public consultation in six British cities involving 70 non-governmental (NGO) charities and community groups. The last examination of the UK's compliance with the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) was in 2011. A UK government report was submitted to CERD in March 2015, and a government delegation will attend to give evidence this week to CERD.