

To: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

From: Human Rights Program, University of Minnesota

Date: May 2021

Re: Input on Resolution 43/1

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We are respectfully submitting this memo in response to the call for input on the “Promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Africans and of people of African descent against excessive use of force and other human rights violations by law enforcement officers”.

With the objective of learning more about the security and wellbeing of Human Rights Defenders within the movement for Black liberation in the United States, researchers from the Human Rights Program conducted 11 interviews with advocates and allies in this movement. The interviews were part of a larger study of Protection Networks that work in various settings around the world to protect Human Rights Defenders. Different levels of confidentiality were provided to the participants as an acknowledgement of the risks anticipated in conducting research regarding protection dynamics to individuals and organizations.

We have transferred the transcripts or notes from the eleven interviews we had with persons engaged in the Black Lives Matter movement from various regions of the U.S. These individuals volunteered to be interviewed in response to public requests through social media announcements and personal referrals. The interviews were carried out between July 2020 and January 2021. The interviewers were Ta’Mara Hill and Nonkululeko Shongwe, both students in the Master of Human Rights Program of the University of Minnesota.

1. The issues identified by interviewees as the focus of their work for these interviewees included police reform, reproductive justice, climate change, training of allies, Holistic Black liberation.
2. The main activities identified as being used by the movement included education trainings, townhalls, protests, lobbying and online activism.
3. The security risks associated with the activism were described to include ongoing mental trauma, physical threats from the police or private persons, hacking and other cyber security threats.
4. The steps that groups and individuals take to minimize risks included engaging in cybersecurity training or using consultants, utilizing safe spaces to allow members to take time to recuperate from trauma. Many interviewees said that they had not taken any steps to minimize risks.