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| GAC Logo | **Global Afrikan Congress**  **uk**  **(GACuk)** |

**Submission to the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent (WGEPAD) on:**

**The Urgency of Now: Systemic Racism and Opportunities in 2021**

GACuk is the UK Chapter of Global Afrikan Congress (GAC), an international network of organisations formed after the work by Afrikans at the UN World Conference Against Racism 2001 who successfully encouraged nation states to recognise our enslavement as a crime against humanity. Our key objective is to achieve Reparations for these crimes which still continue today, including neo-colonialism, genocide and racism.

GAC organises from the grassroots offering local, regional and international community solidarity, co-operation and empowerment. It offers organisations and Afrikans across the world the opportunity to work together in a unified fashion to demand Reparations. We aim to mobilise the human, economic, political, spiritual and cultural resources of Afrika and the Afrikan Diaspora in the interest and to the benefit of Afrika and her people.

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The term ‘Afrikan’ in this document refers to the indigenous people of Afrika and their descendants throughout the Diaspora in all corners of the world. We spell Afrika with a ‘k’ based on the following insights:

* it is a Pan-Afrikan spelling which relates both to the Afrikan continent and the Diaspora;
* it reflects the spelling of ‘Afrika’ an Afrikan languages and
* it includes the concept of ‘ka’, the vital energy which both sustains and creates life, as expressed in ancient Kemetic (Egyptian) teachings

**GACuk - The Urgency of Now: Systemic Racism and Opportunities in 2021**

Firstly, thank you for the opportunity to provide our views on the current human rights situation of people of African descent globally (January-June 2021). There is so much that we could say about the UK but we are part of an international organisation which works with other partners on projects so we will restrict ourselves a little so we can also touch on those.

**Response of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the call by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for contributions to the call for information on “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” April 2021**[[1]](#footnote-1)

We have recently received a copy of this document which affects the original response which we had drafted so we will begin with this. We believe that it is a good example of how little the government understands of the issues for Afrikan people and how they still seem to have a problem with providing accurate, desegregated data to back up their claims.

Introduction and Human Rights: The government insists on saying that the UK is a tolerant country but forgets the Cambridge Dictionary definition includes being ‘willing to accept behaviour and beliefs that are different from your own, although you might not agree with or approve of them’. We struggle with a term that implies being Afrikan or not being Christian, for instance, is something that our government needs to ‘approve of’.

Policing in the United Kingdom: While the document talks about ‘recruiting 20,000 additional police officers’ it fails to mention that their so called austerity measures (cuts) included reducing police officers. There were over 164 thousand police officers in 2010; less than 143 thousand in 2018 and less than 150 thousand in 2020[[2]](#footnote-2). 20,000 is a drop in the ocean when preventative measures which benefitted Afrikan families such as Sure Start (early years support) and Youth Clubs have been drastically cut so very few exist. Measures like Pupil Referral Units for those excluded from school are on the increase feeding a PRU to prison pipeline for many[[3]](#footnote-3).

Race, Policing and Communities while some police forces have community engagement initiatives they usually involve individuals handpicked by the police to sit on panels with no clear link to the communities which most community members are not aware exist. From our members’ sitting on such panels and talking to others, those invited to join rarely seem to know Afrikan people who have been subjected to Stop and Search, been on Black Lives Matters (BLM) demonstrations or other activities that bring trust, accountability and transparency into question.

Deaths in Police Custody: the Angiolini review makes 110 recommendations and the government has divided these into 3 key areas – Prevention, Support and Accountability. It is possible that some of her recommendations, eg the use of restraint and the custody environment, will not fit into these areas as well as they would hope. In the Kevin Clarke case that they mention the force broke regulations by holding misconduct proceedings without telling his family or the police watchdog.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Racial Disproportionality in Deaths in Custody: Stop and Search figures continue to show disproportionate use against Afrikan people in every police force, no matter how large or small the Afrikan population[[5]](#footnote-5). We are over policed and underrepresented yet the government fails to see any possible racism in this.

They quickly release allegations that a victim was linked to drugs or alcohol but forget that if was the case then their handling of incidents should take account of this. Applying that knowledge should mean the person is less likely to die, not more.

Police Restraint and Mental Health: Dalian Atkinson[[6]](#footnote-6) died in 2016 after police were called to his father’s home when he was clearly having a mental health episode. He was tasered for 33 seconds, more than six times the standard practice. The officer denied kicking him in the head but the officer’s bootlace imprint was left on Dalian’s forehead and blood on the officer’s laces. The police officers’ defence was the classic ‘fearing for their life’ one, part of the old ‘Afrikan people are big, violent and dangerous narrative. One officer has been found guilty of manslaughter and is awaiting sentencing. While this is the first case since 1980 where a British police officer has been successfully prosecuted, it is hard to see how Prevention, Support and Accountability as outlined in this document would have made a difference to Dalian’s treatment or outcome.

**Immigration**

We will not go into detail on Windrush as the ‘scandal’ is well known. There have been so many u-turns heads must be spinning hard enough to fall off![[7]](#footnote-7) What is less well known is that although many of the victims lost their pension rights as well as homes, jobs and right to health care many have been told that the Compensation Scheme will not reinstate their pension rights. Some have been denied citizenship by the Home Office because they were out of the UK too long even though it was the Home Office that they kept them out.[[8]](#footnote-8) Their children and grandchildren are told because the elder was not a citizen, many of them are not citizens so they cannot go on to further education with their peers.[[9]](#footnote-9) We believe that this is all part and parcel of decades of immigration laws passed to keep Afrikan people out of the UK even though they were British citizens[[10]](#footnote-10) such as the ‘good character’ test.[[11]](#footnote-11) This test ignores the fact that if someone came to the UK as a child then any criminality was learnt in the UK and so they should not be forcibly repatriated so some other country can deal with it.[[12]](#footnote-12) This practice leaves children without fathers and siblings and sick relatives without their carers. Even the risk of sending people with COVID-19 to another country[[13]](#footnote-13) has not deterred the Home Office from organising forced repatriation flights.[[14]](#footnote-14)

The Compensation Scheme is being administered by the same Home Office which got it so wrong for decades, despite calls for it to be managed by an independent body from Windrush survivors and campaigners [[15]](#footnote-15) and the opposition Labour Party.[[16]](#footnote-16) Staff have resigned “describing the scheme as systemically racist and unfit for purpose”.[[17]](#footnote-17) The government will not accept that some people are still so terrified of being deported that they will not come forward and engage with anyone. The funding for giving advice to potential claimants is no longer with Citizens Advice (one of the advice agencies which may have given wrong advice in the first place) but is now with another body our communities does not use, rather than managed by the Afrikan, Asian and minority ethnic organisations or solicitors’ firms which have been central to getting the scandal recognised and advising on the Scheme. In March the National Audit Office reported that £6.3m of the £15.8m to run the Scheme had been spent on staff.[[18]](#footnote-18) With an average 14 months to process a claim many are dying before they receive compensation. The government no longer releases those figures.

Osime Brown is a 22 year old who came to the UK from Jamaica when he was 4 years old. He was sentenced to 5 years in prison for stealing a friend’s mobile phone. Witnesses and Osime said he was trying to stop the theft. Receiving a prison sentence of more than 12 months means that he was automatically considered for forced repatriation. Osime is profoundly autistic. When he was told that he was going to be sent to Jamaica he asked his mother what bus he would have to get to come and see her. The year that this threat has been hanging over him and being over medicated in prison means that his health has deteriorated so he now has a heart condition that almost killed him.[[19]](#footnote-19) The deportation order is not being pursued but he still has a criminal record so the family has the stress of a campaign to clear his name in case the ‘good character’ law is used again.

Many young people face forced repatriation when they reach 18. Although the UK is refusing to allow people to return home to the Chagos Islands, they also started refusing their descendants the right to remain in the UK.[[20]](#footnote-20) Children in care do not have their citizenship applied for, despite the state taking them from their parents so the state can act as the guardian.[[21]](#footnote-21)

The UK government seems so determined to keep people from their shores that they are apparently exploring using an offshore hub in Afrika.[[22]](#footnote-22) The last time we looked Afrika was made up of independent states where many of the asylum seekers and refugees came from so we’re not quite sure how that would work. The British High Court has already ruled that housing refugees in army barracks was unlawful.[[23]](#footnote-23)

**International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination** **(ICERD)**

We would have liked to report on areas in the CERD report that the government was to have submitted in April 2020 but we are still waiting to see this. It does not appear on the CERD calendar of sessions so we assume that they have not received it either. This speaks volumes about how seriously the government takes such reporting processes. They have not consulted with Afrikan or anti-racist communities, including those which gave evidence in 2016 so can be assumed to have an understanding and interest in the work. There is no National Action Plan but we did have a report from their Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities with members who seemed to be mostly experts on everything except racism and so, not surprisingly, found it was all Afrikan, Asian and minority ethnic people’s fault. Submissions from organisations like GACuk were ignored. We have seen your statement on the report so we do not need to say any more on this.

**Global Afrikan Congress uk (GACuk) work**

We thought that we would finish on a more positive note by sharing some of our work.

GACuk has Monthly Member’s Meetings open to Afrikans in the UK and abroad. We are part of GACeurope region which organised an international Climate Justice for Afrikan People Conference as part of the preparation for the Global Afrikan Congress International Congress of Members. Over 200 Afrikans registered for the Conference. Many of our speakers were young people from Afrika and Europe sharing their work. Participants were asked to make pledges on climate justice which we will share with the Conference Report when it is completed.

GACuk holds an annual Lobby of Parliament on Reparations where Afrikans are encouraged to ask questions of their Member of Parliament (MP). We find this is a useful way to help some in our community overcome a fear of going into the Houses of Parliament as a place where so much of the evil meted out to our community was sanctioned or initiated.

As part of the Lobby we have 3 standing questions on 1. implementing the DDPA; 2. making 1st August (Mosiah) an annual holiday and 3. decriminalising our freedom fighters. We have 2 questions set each year to reflect the current situation or other issues. In 2021 one will be on the disproportionate deaths of Afrikan mothers and babies during pregnancy and childbirth. In 2020 we asked for the creation of a National Action Plan to address the themes of the UN International Decade for People of African Descent. In 2019 we called for forced repatriations to be stopped.

In 2020 the Lobby took place Online. Participants were able to meet with their MP in a Breakout Room. The Lobby finishes with a rally with speakers which is often as issue as we try to have at least one international speaker who usually gets blocked from getting a visa. With an Online rally this was not an issue, one of the few wins with COVID-19.

We work with colleagues on anti-racist and Pan Afrikanist issues, eg annual Deaths in Custody march; Kwanzaa celebrations; Trade Union Congress annual Black Worker’s Conference fringe meeting; UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial; Discrimination march and letter writing campaigns. We have a growing social media presence including an active Facebook Group.

At the start of lockdown we were in our first year of delivering activities from 1st to 21st March as part of the 21 Days Against Racism campaign started by colleagues in an Afrikan coalition in Brazil. When we realised how badly COVID-19 was affecting Afrikan people around the world we joined forces with them and the UK RMT trade union Black Solidarity Committee to co-host an anti-racist Sunday International Solidarity (SIS) Zoom meeting. Our first hour is catching up on COVID-19 and any other issues from around the world and then an invited speaker. Regular participants come from Afrika, Asia, the Caribbean, south America and north America. We have had lively discussions on:

1. why Germany’s offer of money to Namibia for the Herero and Nama genocide was not negotiated with the victims so was not Reparations; [[24]](#footnote-24)
2. is the US HR40 really Reparations?
3. what can we learn from the Kenyan Land and Freedom fighters’ victory?
4. Malcolm X’s relevance to the struggle against racism and Pan Afrikanism;
5. do we really have political opposition parties, eg where Swaziland kings and chiefs can tax people so that many have had to hand over their land and are now living in poverty?
6. Afrikan communities being polluted by mass farming in the US; [[25]](#footnote-25)
7. political violence against Afrikan people such as Marielle Franco[[26]](#footnote-26) assassinated in Brazil and
8. art as a weapon[[27]](#footnote-27)

as well as COVID-19 and lighter subjects like inspiring music or favourite books. We not only learn more about our Afrikan family but join forces to praise achievements or raise our concerns about human rights abuses with, eg governments, the UA, the UN, etc

**Protecting the Human Rights of African People**

We believe that more needs to be done to hold nation states accountable through ICERD, SDGs, DPPA, CEDAW, etc. That means the UN making information more readily available so citizens know what commitments their nation states have made which they can try to get them to honour.

We believe the UN should look at how the requirements of its funding opportunities may act as a barrier for Afrikan organisations unable to get recognition as NGOs.

We believe that the Permanent Afrikan Forum needs to be established and funded ASAP in line with the suggestions in the May 2019 Information Note comparing other Fora as a minimum.[[28]](#footnote-28)

We believe that more needs to be done to promote Reparations as a way of addressing past human rights abuses so Afrikan communities are better able to resist new abuses.

1. https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Racism/RES\_43\_1/AdditionalResponsesMemberStates/united-kingdom-note-verbale.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.statista.com/statistics/303963/uk-police-officer-number [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/mar/24/exclusion-rates-black-caribbean-pupils-england [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-55694916 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/crime-justice-and-the-law/policing/stop-and-search/latest [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-shropshire-57495426 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/apr/22/windrush-victims-to-be-offered-free-legal-advice-amid-low-compensation-take-up [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/mar/05/windrush-victim-denied-uk-citizenship-home-office-admitting-error-trevor-donald [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/dec/18/three-generations-of-windrush-family-struggling-to-prove-they-are-british [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m00068sk [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/apr/23/home-office-handling-of-windrush-citizenship-claims-ruled-irrational [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/deportation-uk-jamaica-charter-flight-home-office-detention-reshawn-davis-a9324496.html [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-55197386 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. https://scoop.company/uncovered-the-brutal-secrets-of-uk-deportation-flight-esparto-11-immigration-and-asylum [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/uknews/uk-windrush-activists-demand-change-in-compensation-program/ar-AALmDoe [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jun/21/independent-body-should-run-windrush-compensation-scheme-labour-says [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/nov/18/black-official-quit-allegedly-racist-windrush-compensation-scheme [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-57196605 [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jun/15/home-office-abandons-plans-deport-osime-brown-jamaica [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. https://inews.co.uk/news/uk/teenage-descendant-family-evicted-british-island-diego-garcia-faces-deportation-194172 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/apr/11/new-windrush-is-in-making-its-victims-are-the-most-vulnerable-of-young-people [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/priti-patel-migrants-uk-offshore-hub-africa-plans-1074471 [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jun/03/napier-barracks-asylum-seekers-win-legal-challenge-against-government [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. https://www.dw.com/en/namibia-chiefs-reject-insulting-german-aid-offer-over-colonial-killings/a-57731356 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/sep/20/north-carolina-hog-industry-pig-farms [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/15/marielle-franco-shot-dead-targeted-killing-rio [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. https://www.tayoalukoandfriends.com [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Racism/IntDecade/Forum/InformationNote2019.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-28)