

Structural Racism, Police Violence and the Right to Protest

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The extrajudicial killing of George Floyd and the efforts to suppress Black Lives Matter protests against systemic racism and violence against people of African descent have galvanized a global response.

Last June, the families of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Michael Brown, and Philando Castile, together with over 650 civil society organizations, called on the United Nations Human Rights Council to convene a special session to respond to the situation of escalating human rights abuses in the United States. They sought the creation of an independent commission of inquiry into recent extrajudicial police killings of people of African descent in the United States, as well as allegations of excessive use of force against peaceful protesters and journalists in the demonstrations in the wake of the murder of George Floyd.

In response, the [UNHRC held an urgent debate on systemic racism and police brutality](#), which resulted in a resolution 43/1 which: 1) condemns racially discriminatory law enforcement practices and structural racism in the criminal justice system, as well as the recent incidents of excessive force against peaceful demonstrators; 2) requests that the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights prepare a report on systemic racism and violations of international human rights law against Africans and people of African descent by law enforcement agencies, “especially those incidents that resulted in the death of George Floyd,” and; 3) requests that the High Commissioner, “examine government responses to anti-racism peaceful protests, including the alleged use of excessive force.”

The virtual side event will consider the global impact of systemic racism and law enforcement brutality, exploring the lack of accountability for police violence and the importance of the freedom of expression and assembly across the globe on these issues.

MODERATORS:

Christina Hioureas, Counsel, Chair – United Nations Practice Group, Foley Hoag LLP

Laura O’Brien, Access Now U.N. Advocacy Officer

PANELISTS:

Jamil Dakwar, Director, ACLU Human Rights Program

Professor E. Tendayi Achiume, Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

Philonise Floyd, Brother of George Floyd, victim of police violence

Ben Crump, Legal Counsel to the Family of George Floyd

Mr. Clément Nyaletsossi Voule (TBC), UN Special Rapporteur on Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association

Professor Gay McDougall, Senior Fellow and Distinguished Scholar-in-Residence, Leitner Center for International Law and Justice/Center for Race, Law and Justice, Fordham University School of Law

