

Under Embargo until 00:01 Wednesday 14th July 2021

NGOs Warn Government Approach to Race at Risk of Failing International Human Rights Obligations.

A new report co-ordinated by the Runnymede Trust, compiled with evidence from over 100 civil society organisations, has found that the Government is in breach of key articles of the UN treaty the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD).

The report is the independent shadow civil society report which will be submitted to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. An independent civil society report is submitted to the Committee every 4 years alongside an equivalent Government (state) report, and is used by the UN as a barometer to assess member countries' progress on race equality.

This report shows that racism is systemic in England and that legislation, institutional practices and society's customs continue to combine to harm BME groups.

Disparities facing BME groups in England are sustained across the areas of health, the criminal justice system, education, employment, immigration and politics. The general trend from the data shows that inequality along racial lines has escalated since the same report was released 5 years ago.

The shadow report raises considerable concern about upcoming legislation, including the Electoral Integrity Bill, the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill and the New Immigration Plan which could pose a significant threat to ethnic minorities' rights.

In the wake of an unprecedented global pandemic and world-wide protests following the murder of George Floyd in the U.S, the shadow report has culminated in some startling revelations. Key statistics include:

- Under Section 60, Black people are around 18 times more likely to be searched than their White counterparts.
- BME children make up over half of the child population in prison (28% are Black). This is an increase of 15% over the past decade.
- By the end of secondary school, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are almost three years behind their white counterparts, and Black Caribbean students are 11 months behind their White British counterparts.
- BME people with learning disabilities die younger than their White counterparts; there is a 26-year difference between White and BME people with profound and multiple learning disabilities.
- Had the white population experienced the same risk of death from Covid-19 as Black groups, there would have been an estimated 58,000 additional deaths between March - May 2020.
- In 2019, 90% of Australian nationals were released before spending 28 days in detention compared with 60% of Nigerian nationals and 40% of Jamaican nationals.

These are a small handful of 60+ pages of shocking figures and statistics, sourced from other organisations, which paint a stark picture for racial equality in England. All statistics are fully referenced and credited in the report.

This report offers important recommendations for the Government to demonstrate its commitment to its equality and human rights obligations to BME groups in England.

Key recommendations include:

- The UK government must urgently review its approach to equalities and ensure that its laws and policies fully comply with the definition of discrimination under International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Article 1.
- The UK government must urgently develop and implement a strategy to eliminate racial discrimination and advance race equality across all policy areas based on wide, open-ended, comprehensive consultation with civil society organisations and communities.
- The UK government must consult on positive proposals to introduce automatic voter registration of all British citizens (in the British Isles and abroad) once they reach the age of 18, as well as all eligible foreign nationals residing in the UK.
- The UK government should urgently establish a statutory time limit on immigration detention.
- In light of the very low 'success' rate of stop and search under Section 60, weighed against the negative impact on community trust in the police of the extreme disproportionality in its use against Black people, the UK government should repeal Section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994.

The shadow civil society report has been endorsed by 78 NGOs and race equality organisations.

Dr Halima Begum, CEO of the Runnymede Trust said:

"The UK is one of the few countries in the world where accurate state-led analysis of racial equity is even vaguely feasible. The government points to its efforts these past few years to advance racial equality, such as ensuring the effective rollout of the Covid vaccine to BME groups and addressing the wrongs of the Windrush scandal.

"Progress has been made. But race has become a needlessly fractious issue in the national discourse, and many members of our Black and minority ethnic communities continue to experience stark disproportionate outcomes in their life chances. From stop and search to inequalities in maternal health; lower levels of home ownership to constraints on pay and professional opportunities, this report provides further evidence that taking a colourblind approach to equality will not be the most effective way to achieve social mobility."

Lord Simon Woolley, Director of Operation Black Vote said:

"The divisive, and dishonest Sewell report into race inequality represents the biggest lost opportunity to effectively tackle systemic racism in the UK.

"This shadow report, in sharp contrast, offers a number of strategic recommendations which together present a sorely needed comprehensive race equality strategy fit for the 21st century".

Gracie Bradley, Director at Liberty, said:

"We should all be treated equally and with respect – but this report provides clear evidence that the UK is falling far short. In the last year alone the Government has appointed a commission which denied that structural racism exists, and introduced damaging new legislation which will further entrench discrimination in the form of the policing bill.

"But we have also seen people across the country come together to stand up against racism in the UK and to demand justice. Those voices are only growing louder, and they give us a lot to be hopeful about.

"We are committed to standing with them to demand not just that the policing bill be scrapped, but also for an end to other racist policies like the hostile environment, immigration detention, discriminatory surveillance and racialised counter-terror measures."

Caitlin Boswell, Policy & Advocacy Advisor at the JCWI said:

"There is overwhelming evidence that the Government's Hostile Environment causes discrimination against all migrants and Black and minority ethnic British citizens - as we saw with the Windrush scandal. Over the course of the pandemic we've seen these policies, including the NHS data-sharing regime, and No Recourse to Public Funds rules put Black and brown people at even greater risk.

"The Government's 'New Plan for Immigration' is on course to further deepen racial inequalities. The proposals look set to cement the hostile environment and end refugee protection as we know it, forcing people who've sought safety here into greater precarity and destitution. If this Government were serious about tackling racial inequality, it would be scrapping the Hostile Environment entirely, not entrenching it."

Senior Policy Officer, **Alba Kapoor**, and CEO of the Runnymede Trust **Dr Halima Begum**, are available for interview. For more details, please contact communications officer Rohini Kahrs on communications@runnymedetrust.org or 07535 286975.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

The Runnymede Trust have co-ordinated the report after being successful in an EHRC tender programme which aims to help civil society organisations to produce independent submissions and participate in the UN process.

The UK government did not submit its due report in April 2020, citing Covid-19 as the reason for delay. Over a year later, It has still not submitted its report.

The Runnymede Trust was responsible for co-ordinating both the 2011 and 2016 shadow reports.

About ICERD

The [United Nations International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#) (ICERD) monitors how well governments are promoting racial equality and challenging racial discrimination in their

countries. The UK government ratified to follow ICERD in 1969 to take action on eliminating racial discrimination in all its forms.

About the Runnymede Trust

The Runnymede Trust is the UK's leading independent race equality think tank. We generate intelligence for multi-ethnic Britain through research, network building, leading debate, and policy engagement.

Since 1968, the Runnymede Trust has strived to build a Britain in which all citizens and communities feel valued, enjoy equal opportunities, lead fulfilling lives, and share a common sense of belonging.

In recent years our work has included playing a key role in bringing the Windrush Scandal to light; publishing landmark reports on Islamophobia, Race & Class, and COVID-19 inequalities; producing groundbreaking research with Penguin Random House to expand the English Literature curriculum; and highlighting racial disparities across labour markets, education and criminal justice in mainstream media.

The Runnymede Trust believes in working alongside civil society, policymakers and MPs to address the very real blight of racism and discrimination in Britain today.