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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Geledés - Instituto da Mulher Negra, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[4 February 2024]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Addressing Cultural Rights

Even though the contribution of Africans and Afro-descendants is portrayed as an important pillar in the formation of Brazilian culture, the black population is still severely affected by racism and other discriminations that hinder the realization of the right to life, culture, education, memory, and history. According to a 2018 study conducted by the JLeiva Culture and Sports consultancy, the black population has less access to theaters, museums, and cinemas. The study indicates that this factor is directly related to the low income and education levels of black individuals, which are also results of the impact of racism on the living conditions of black men, women, girls, and boys.

The last two decades in Brazil were marked by the implementation of initiatives and legislations focusing on combating racial inequalities through culture and education, such as laws 10.639/03, 11.645/08, and 12.711/2012. However, the appreciation of black memory and history still progresses at a very slow pace. Between 2015 and 2023, our country was under the rule of an authoritarian and undemocratic government that invested little in education and culture, leading to significant setbacks in these areas. During this period, the Ministry of Culture was abolished, as well as the Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality (Seepir). These actions contributed to the reduction of initiatives that encouraged the production, preservation, and access to black culture, ultimately contributing to the marginalization of the Afro-descendant population.

In this context, Brazilian black movement organizations played a central role in developing actions to denounce these setbacks. The demand for the right to memory was explicitly expressed as a fundamental path to recognize the force of race, gender, and class discriminations that mark the nation's formation, historically harming black men, black women, black girls, and black boys, producing ongoing inequalities.

We understand that the erasure of the black experience and black memory from national history reinforces the dehumanization of Afro-descendant individuals by not acknowledging their intelligence and their role in shaping the country. This allows the spread of violence against this segment of society since the existence of this population is not valued and recognized as humanly powerful. In this sense, we highlight the growth of violence committed against the Afro-descendant population, hindering the practice of religious beliefs, cultural manifestations, and the visibility of their achievements. In 2023, for example, Brazil recorded a 140.3% increase in reports of religious intolerance and racism, according to a survey presented by the Ministry of Human Rights.

This aspect is not limited to Brazil. The black presence, as well as the memory and history of the participation of Africans and Afro-descendants in the cultural, political, social, and economic formation of Latin American countries, is also ignored by most national states, resulting in racial discriminations, as noted by historian Flávio Thales Ribeiro Francisco. The statement made by the former president of Argentina, Alberto Fernandez, in June 2021, is emblematic in this regard. Referring to his European ancestry, he disqualifies the indigenous and African origins of other peoples and reinforces the myth of the non-existence of blacks and indigenous people in Argentina: "the Mexicans came from the indigenous, the Brazilians from the jungle, and we [Argentines] arrived by boat." By disqualifying and invisibilizing the black presence in Argentina, Fernandez justifies and does not take responsibility, for example, for the inclusion problems in the job market that affect Afro-Argentines, as pointed out by the local black movement.

For social justice and the eradication of racism, it is necessary to recognize the consequences of slavery and racism that historically hinder black citizenship. National states must take responsibility for the consequences of these processes and formulate reparative policies that allow black men and women to access their rights and not just their duties. This action is a crucial step towards building a fairer future with fewer inequalities, without racism, sexism, with citizen participation, in line with constitutional principles and existing international treaties, as emphasized by the Black Coalition for Rights, a movement that brings together almost 300 organizations from the Brazilian black movement. Without combating racism in the promotion of the right to memory, there is no realization of human and social rights.

Therefore, Geledés - Instituto da Mulher Negra and Casa SueliCarneiro is committed to the fight in this field and advocates for the construction of a programmatic agenda to change this scenario in Latin America.

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