**Forum:** Human Rights Council

**Issue:** Addressing reformation of international policies regarding racism-motivated crimes and terrors given recent rise in hate speech and racially motivated discriminatory policies in MEDCs

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Introduction

Over the past decades, the world has become increasingly globalized, following the further integration of culture and race with it transcending national borders. Despite this, the global population has not fully shifted with the change. This has exacerbated social tensions amongst different groups in nations, presenting significant obstacles for the governing bodies of each member states to work towards equality and harmony between people. All of this has become even more apparent in recent years, where this has been a reported surge of hate speech and racially motivated crimes. The COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated this issue, fueling xenophobia against the Asian community. Furthermore, MEDCs seem to be witnessing the biggest waves of problems of this nature. The United Nations has “expressed grave concern over a sharp rise in hate speech” and states the hate speech “dehumanizes individuals and communities”. Such racially motivated crimes and hate speech aren’t just harmful to groups and individuals on a violent level; they hinder the growth of minority groups, widen disparities in society and have long-term societal impacts.

As of today, some international policies are in place to combat this issue. However, more is needed considering the extent to which discrimination has risen. There is a crucial need for reformation in current policies, the construction of new frameworks, and stronger enforcement of such policies.

Definition of Key Terms

Hate Speech

Hate speech encapsulates discrimination against individuals or groups including race, religion, ethnicity, sex, gender, etc. It presents itself in a wide range of forms of expression such as language, images, cartoons, gestures.

**Minority Groups**

A group within society that coexists with the population of a nation or area, but differ from the dominant population. This can be in terms of race, ethnicity, language, culture, etc. Minority groups commonly face discrimination in their countries.

**More Economically Developed Countries (MEDC’s)**

These are countries that typically have more wealth and higher standards of living relative to other countries in the world.

**Xenophobia**

Xenophobia is defined as prejudice and racism against people from different countries. In this context, Xenophobia has worsened causing the increase of hate speech and racially motivated attacks.

**Hate Crimes**

Hate crimes are any crimes where there is prejudice against a certain group. A racially motivated attack and hate speech can be classified as a hate crime.

Anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitism is a form of racism, in particular it is prejudice and violence against people of Jewish background.

Islamophobia

Islamophobia is another form of racism against islam or Muslims. It can be viewed as a geopolitical force and source of terrorism.

Background

General History

Racially motivated crimes and hate crimes, in general, date far back to ancient civilizations, where different groups of people come into conflict, stemming from prejudice against one group being perceived as “different.” Various notable cases revolving around hate crimes can be seen throughout history.

One instance of a wave of racially motivated attacks in the past include the Jim Crow laws in the United States, where the legalization of racial discrimination was a catalyst for widespread, racially motivated crimes. There was also the Apartheid in South Africa, lasting from 1948 to 1994, which institutionalized racial segregation and promoted hate crimes. These are some of the many cases of racially motivated attacks and hate speech, and such crimes have persisted into our modern day.

Another case is the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia that occurred on August 12th, 2017. This rally was composed of a group of white nationalists and neo-Nazis who were protesting the removal of Confederate monuments, reminders of the United States long history with racism. The group marched through the campus of the University of Virginia, chanting nazi associated phrases such as “blood and soil”. By noon the next day, tension between the two sides was at an all-time high, with the local Virginia government declaring the town a state of emergency. Then, at 1:42 p.m., one of the white supremacists rammed his car into the counter-protesters, killing one and injuring nineteen others. The Unite the Right rally was wang amongst a wave of far-right extremist movements that broke out across the country that year.

As of most recently, amidst the current Palestinian and Israeli conflict, the world has seen a rise in the amount of antisemitism, a problem that was already prominent before the war. Following the killings of Hamas in early October, violent pro-Palestinian movements have been the most prevalent in the United States and Western European countries. Advocacy groups in the U.S. have reported a 388% rise in antisemitic incidents in the first two weeks of the war, paralleled by the reported 1353% in antisemitic offences in the U.K. (Lundgren). Many Jewish schools in such countries have had to shut down in fears of violent attack on staff and students, Synagogues have been locked down and social media has erupted in anti-jewish sentiments. This has caused many governments to implement new measures to protect the Jewish community further. For example, the FBI and National Security Coordinator have deemed these incidents “unacceptable and dangerous” and have announced more efforts to combat the unprecedented rise.

**Causes**

Historical Context

As mentioned, racial segregation and discrimination have a deep-rooted history in our world. Due to the European nations previously dominating and colonizing, including the slave trade, it has caused a power imbalance between minority groups and the dominant population. What has resulted from this is the formation of a hierarchy between races and the spreading of thoughts of racial superiority amongst groups in society. Furthermore, this negative past has fostered a substantial amount of resentment between the different groups in society. This has resulted in institutional racism or systematic racism, Which is when groups(s) hold racial attitudes towards other groups in society, and the prejudice translates to practices and policies used on a day-to-day basis.

Economic

There is a connection between systemic Racism and economic disparities, the two of which are linked to racially motivated attacks and hate speech. Systematic Racism impacts a multitude of factors in terms of standards of living. This begins with youth; research has found that school districts with more students of colour gain less revenue than districts with fewer students of colour, meaning less funding and lower quality of education. It follows people of colour into their adulthood. A study shows that “Black Americans with more “white-sounding” names received 50% more callbacks for their job applications” (Bertrand and Mullaniathan), and despite having equal college degrees, white college graduates are more likely to get hired. All of this has meant that there is a high percentage of unemployed that are people of colour, which is equivalent to a lower likelihood of homeownership, food insecurities and lack of healthcare. The Southern Poverty Law Center and the FBI of the United States report income equality is tied to higher rates of income. In the ten days following the 2016 election in the United States, 900 racially motivated incidents and hate crimes were reported, more in some states than others. After some collection on socioeconomic factors from each state, taking into account income inequality, education years, etc., it was concluded that there was a correlation between a state with a larger wealth gap and lower rates of education and one with higher levels of hate crime, this is due to the social environment surrounding the population of each state.

Social

First is the psychology of society, where there are existing biases against races or something known as “colourism”. Colourism is a prejudice towards people of colour, whereby skin tone causes negative stereotypes. Hence, people of colour, with, for example, Afrocentric features, will be more likely to be associated with a lower social class, causing fear of criminality and being looked down upon. Furthermore, areas with lower education and less exposure to the international community and different cultures result in an overall less inclusive society. These factors combined will create racism that is deeply embedded in society and almost becomes part of human nature. This is called intergenerational racism, racism and prejudice that is passed on from one generation to another. Therefore, if people have a negative bias, it will most likely be reflected in their children. This sets up a never-ending negative cycle where breaking it is imperative to achieving equality.

COVID-19 Pandemic

Aside from the COVID-19 pandemic's health implications, it also played a role in the spike of racially motivated attacks and hate speech towards the Asian community globally. In May 2020, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guerrero stated, “The pandemic continues to unleash a tsunami of hate and xenophobia” and called for governments to “act now to strengthen the immunity of our societies against the virus of hate”. The issue was further worsened by governments and political leaders as their language use in regard to the pandemic inadvertently placed the blame on China. This was seen in various MEDC countries like the United States, United Kingdom, Spain, France, etc. Racist rhetoric from important world leaders, such as former U.S. President Donald Trump referring to COVID-19 as the “Chinese virus”, caused increased racist attacks, and Asian people have fallen victim to racist abuse, bullying,” caused increased racist attacks, and Asian people have fallen victim to racist abuse, bullying, and discrimination. All of this was quite publicized, with dozens of news reports coming out. It is reported that in the U.S., 1.3 of Asians know another Asian person who’s been attacked since COVID-19, and in the U.K., hate crimes in London surged 80% from 2019 to 2020 (The Diversity Trust), the majority being racially motivated.

**Effects**

Mental Health

Hate speech and racially motivated crimes take a significant toll on victims who face it; this is referred to as racial trauma. In a 2021 journal by Pediatrics, many young adults who are subject to racial discrimination are said to be around 25% (Novotney) more likely to be found with a mental health disorder and face double the risk of gaining psychological distress than those who didn’t. Moreover, once a person falls victim to a racially motivated attack, they will end up with many mental health issues such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and substance use. It undoubtedly does a great deal to the mental health of people of colour. There is also some evidence suggesting that hate crimes cause damage to one's physical health. As an extension of depression, anger and distress from facing discrimination, their physical health starts to deteriorate, resulting in obesity and cardiovascular issues.

Impact on youth

For youth, adolescence and teenage years are the most influential times which shape the people they become. If, during this time, they are to be facing racial violence and hate speech, it possibly could be detrimental to them. This begins on the previously mentioned psychological level, where children facing hate speech and racism at a young age have an increased chance of facing mental health issues. It also may lead to Internalized racism, as when such stereotypes are held against them, they begin to conform and act to fit the image of what others perceive them to be. For example, the youth of some marginalized groups are assumed to have behavioural issues and are treated by their teachers and classmates as such. This may result in these youth acting in accordance to indirectly agree with the racism. In addition, the effects of race-based trauma that youth face will be transferred from one generation to the other, creating a never-ending cycle.

Major Parties Involved

**Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)**

The OHCHR is a department under the United Nations Secretariat whose main goal is to guard and promote human rights in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The OHCHR has actively spoken out against hate speech and racial violence in the past few years. In May 2019, they launched the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, which was aimed at using social media platforms for advocacy. At the beginning of 2011, the group started a series of conferences across the globe, gathering many human rights experts. The first one was in the Americas, where they addressed human rights standards in addressing incitement to hatred; they continued to do this in the Asia Pacific and African regions.

**Human Rights Watch**

Human Rights Watch is a nongovernmental organization that aims to further investigate and report human rights abuses globally and specifically target governments to make changes in their countries in terms of the formation of new laws and enforcing laws. They have been the main body participating in the effort to end racial violence in the world. They publish many research reports investigating statistics and in-depth information on racial violence in different countries.

**United Kingdom**

United Kingdom is one MEDC that has been facing a surge in racially motivated attacks and hate speech in recent years. In 2022, there were 145,212 hate crime incidents in England and Wales, and an estimated 43% of them were race-related crimes. The UK government previously launched an action plan for hate crimes from 2012 to 2015, where the government worked on publishing more statistics, improving the way police record the crime, subsidizing organizations that work with victims of hate crimes and making the penalties for hate crime harsher under law. However, racially motivated attacks and hate speech have continued to rise; in order to combat this, they have launched a new action plan which focuses on encouraging the reporting of hate crimes and increasing their understanding towards the issue.

**United States**

The United States has faced significant issues of racial discrimination and race-based crimes for decades. The FBI reported 8,005 incidents of race-based hate in 2021, an 11.6% surge from previous years that is said to be “fueled by racial bias”. Another report published this year showed that the top target of racially motivated hate crimes is African Americans. Moreover, there is a strong connection between gun violence and racially motivated hate crimes within the country, with several mass shootings across the country motivated by racial discrimination. As of May 2022, the United States Department of Justice announced a $10 million grant fund to support community-based approaches to tackle hate crimes. President Biden has also signed an order of “Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government”. This order emphasized and aimed for equal opportunity and highlighted the costs of systemic racism, persistent poverty and other disparities.

Timeline of Events

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| Date | Description of event |
| 1993 | United Nations Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism was established |
| August 31, 2001 | World Conference against Racism, Racial Dscrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerence held in Durban, South Africa |
| September 8. 2001 | Durban Declatation and Programme of Action (DDPA) adopted |
| March 21, 2004 | European Coalition of Cities Against Racism (ECCAR) launched |
| October 12, 2017 | Unite the Right Rally |
| November 28, 2022 | UNESCO Global Forum Against Racism |
| October 7, 2023 | Armed conflict between Israel and Hamas-led Palenstinian militant group begins |

Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

**European Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable cities (ECCAR)**

In 2004, UNESCO launched the European Coalition of Cities Against Racism. The initiative's goal was to form a group of cities that wanted to share and exchange resources and experiences that would go towards making tools to help improve policies to help end racism. This is in hopes of a more inclusive society that can safely grow together. The ECCAR first adopted the 10 Points Action Plan on the 10th of December, 2004. This document was composed of a list of 10 commitments, including “Greater Vigilance against Racism”, “Hate Crimes and Conflict Management”, and others, all centred around the removal of racial discrimination. Signatory by cities showed devotion to using the ECCAR’s strategies and action programmes to fulfil their goals. The ECCAR has several cities fully taking action, raising awareness, developing policies and working with other cities to exchange information. However, the limitations were due to the nature of how the ECCAR is formed; with numerous different cities, implementation of their goals is inconsistent among the cities. There is also a lack of methods to properly assess the effectiveness of policies implemented, making it difficult to see real progress in the long term.

United Nations Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism

The Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism was mandated in 1993 by the Commission on Human Rights [RES 1993/20](https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/E/CHR/resolutions/E-CN_4-RES-1993-20.doc) and further defined in 1994 by [RES 1994/64](https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/E/CHR/resolutions/E-CN_4-RES-1994-64.doc). It was also recently renewed by the Human Rights Council for another three years on April 4th, 2023. The rapporteur investigates different forms of racism, such as xenophobia and racial discrimination globally and makes suggestions on how to combat the issue. They carry this out by visiting different countries, collecting information on governments and vulnerable societies, and publishing reports on the information found. They also look at racism on a global scale and publish related statistics and data regarding it, for example, certain trends, surges and most at-risk areas. By doing so, they hope to raise awareness of racial discrimination as a whole and evoke discussion on the global stage. Despite this, there are limitations to the Special Rapporteur. Like many other initiatives, there is no way to enforce measures taken or suggested policies, especially as it isn’t binding. Governments may also choose not to allow them to enter and research into the countries, causing several gaps in the data collected.

**Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA)**

The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action was adopted twenty years ago when global leaders attended The World Conference against Racism. This comprehensive document sets the goals and displays the world's commitment to the fight against racism. Since 2001, it has made several efforts to combat racial discrimination and xenophobia and encouraged legislative measures, action plans and mechanisms for monitoring. Over the past two decades, it has made quite significant progress, with 42 nations adopting or amending their legislation banning racial discrimination, 23 nations and regional institutions adopting policies against racism, 26 nations joining the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination and several other actions taken globally. In contrast, the DDPA was also unsuccessful in some aspects. Due to the number of countries it included, there were a lot of contrasting opinions and views on how to implement it. During the conference itself, there was controversy that the language being used was anti-Semitic and purposefully targeted at Israel; this hindered action following the conference. There was also a failure by some countries to carry out the principles of the DDPA and no way to enforce them.

Possible Solutions

* There should be better cooperation between governments in order to combat this issue. As of today, all efforts and intiatives taken are rather dated and the political landscape and our world has significantly changed in the last decade. Hence, it is vital discussion is revivded through various forms. This can included holding conferences, establishing tools and mechanisms for multiple nations to work together and exchange information. Governments should also work together with other bodies, such as IGOs and NGOs with prior experience in combatting this issue to lay the frameworks to try to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination. In order to do this, there must be a substantial amount of research and understanding done by the nations in order to know what policies are most relevant and suitable to their country. Furthermore, in terms of developing frameworks, nations should show commitment in building or laying the foundations towards changes, whether that be through policies, legislation, etc.
* As previously mentioned, racial discrimination is an issue within society and is intergenerational. It is key to break this negative cycle by better educating and raising awareness within citizens. This must start from our youth in primary and secondary education. In these lower years, children should be taught the importance of inclusivity and mutual respect and also be aware on setting boundaries to protect themselves. What this means is that children, especially those of colour, are aware of gravity of racial discrimination and taught to speak out if necessary. At younger ages children often are unable to comprehend racial discrimination and may take it as the norm. Alongside this, schools must provide a safe environment and support system for students who may face racial discrimination, in particular in areas where it is more common. Adults also should be educated on the issue . Campaigns, education programmes and promotion of dialogue can be set up by governments, possibly through working with relvant NGOs.
* In extention to the previous point, there should be sufficient support system for victims of racial discrimination. This begins with monitoring; governments should ensure adequate monitoring of the numbers of hate crimes, areas with the most cases, and other relevant information that can go towards the betterment of policies regarding the issue. There should also be platforms for victims to report and then a good system in place to ensure the case if followed up on and the victim receives any help and support. This may include helping with medical bills and the provision of counseling and legal aid. The governments should also make efforts to consistently pay attention, learn from race-based violence cases, and collect information to go towards future reformation of policies.
* Efforts towards making changes regarding the safety of online platforms need to be addressed. Social media has been used as a means to spread racism and increased hate online. Governments should develop legal frameworks that are aimed explicitly towards any hate speech online. This includes the further monitoring of social media companies, making sure that their guidelines are up to date and their users are held accountable for their actions. If this is not up to a set standard, legal action should be able to be taken against them. Another way to prevent hate speech online and increase the safety of the users may be the implementation of reporting mechanisms that are easily accessible. Furthermore, nations should work together to set a standard regarding legislation addressing racism that is recognized by all.

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