

## **UNA Westminster position statement on race inequality and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD).**

UNA Westminster has played an important role in facilitating debate about the UN Treaty Monitoring process.

In June 2015, we held a meeting chaired by Lord Herman Ouseley “Does the UK have a credible race equality strategy or is a new vision required”. Speakers included Rachel Zaltzman from the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and Barbara Cohen an NGO delegate to CERD in both 2011 and 2016.

The meeting explained how ordinary people could contribute directly to the civil society shadow report on how the UK had (or had not) met its CERD Treaty obligations.

The previous report in 2011 had criticised the UK for among other things the treatment of gypsies and travellers facing eviction from Dale Farm site in Essex and the disproportionate use of stop and search.

CERD reported again on the UK in 2016. In its concluding observations it made a series of recommendations on how the UK should counter hate crimes. It also called on the UK to undertake a thorough assessment of the impact on ethnic minority groups of the reforms to the legal aid system e.g. the imposition of tribunal fees.

Other recommendations included the need to provide adequate and culturally appropriate accommodation for gypsies, travellers and Roma and effective measures to ensure that stop and powers are used in a lawful, non-arbitrary and non-discriminatory manner on the basis of reasonable suspicion, with rigorous monitoring and review mechanisms.

The report also focused on the overrepresentation of persons belonging to black and ethnic minority groups at all stages of the criminal justice system, measures to ensure improved accessibility, availability and quality of health care services, the need for the systematic collection of disaggregated data on employment, and unemployment rates, and steps to strengthen efforts to eliminate racist bullying and harassment in schools. The UN also called for a time limit on the duration of immigration detention.

In December 2016 following the publication of the CERD report, UNA Westminster organised a follow-up discussion with EHRC represented by Andrea Murray (its Director of Human Rights), Barbara Cohen and Ian Naysmith from the Department of Communities and Local Government. Lord Ouseley was again in the Chair.

There was much criticism of previous Government inaction on CERD and public policy and perceived inaction on race more generally.

Those who attended the meeting learned of a new initiative (announced the previous summer) from No 10 to undertake a comprehensive audit of public services to identify and tackle racial disparities and injustice.

Also in the summer of 2016 the EHRC published its own review into race equality in Britain covering education, employment, housing, pay and living standards, health, criminal justice and participation.

The EHRC believes that continued failure to tackle deep rooted race inequality will exacerbate divisions in our society unless urgent action is taken by Government

On 21 March 2017, coinciding with UN Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, MPs of all parties called on Government to implement the recommendations from the EHRC's major review on race.

UNA Westminster supports the positions adopted by EHRC and civil society race organisations such as the Runnymede Trust and will continue to monitor the Government's performance and actions on race and particularly with regard to meeting its international obligations on racial equality.

