



Urban Justice Center

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June 10, 2008

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20520
Fax: 202-647-2283

Dear Secretary Rice:

We, the undersigned organizations dedicated to fighting racial injustice and promoting human rights domestically and globally urge the United States government to engage as a full participant in the Durban review process including the upcoming June 17-19, 2008 Regional Preparatory meeting in Brasilia, Brazil, the second Preparatory Committee meeting in October, 2008, and the Durban Review Conference scheduled for April 2009.

We commend the government on the recent steps it has taken towards combating racial discrimination including the submission of its fourth, fifth, and sixth periodic reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in April 2007 and sending of a high-level delegation to the United States review by CERD in February 2008. Likewise, we commend the government for honoring the request by Mr. Doudou Diene, the Special Rapporteur on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and related intolerances, for an invitation to conduct his current fact-finding mission in the United States. We also note that on behalf of the United States government, you signed a Joint Action Plan with Brazil to eliminate racial and ethnic discrimination and promote equality in March of 2008. These are steps in the right direction however, we believe that the government can and should do more.

It is unfortunate that the United States has declined to participate in the Durban review process thus far. The Durban Review Conference is currently the most important forum for recommitting the global community to combating racism and racial discrimination as articulated in the 2001 World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) Declaration and Program of Action. Given the historical legacy of racism and the present and persistent problems of racial and ethnic discrimination in the United States, it is imperative that the government engage as a full and active member in the conference. We are aware that the United States government presented reasons for withdrawing from the WCAR in 2001, however those reasons are not related to the WCAR Declaration and Program of Action that articulates commitments by United Nations member states in fighting racism and racial discrimination. In the current political climate, it would be imprudent for the United States to be out of step with the global community in combating racism.

The United States is well placed to provide global leadership in eliminating all forms of racial discrimination, and full participation in the preparatory meetings for the Durban Review Conference as well as in the actual summit is a necessary step in fulfilling this mandate. We are pleased that the lack of participation by the government has not stopped civil society groups from engaging in the process. Some groups including Cidadao Global and the Latin American Caribbean Cultural Center among others have already organized national calls to facilitate participation by U.S. non-governmental groups in the upcoming Regional Preparatory meeting

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in Brasilia, Brazil.

We ask that the government reconsider its decision in time to send a delegation to the Regional Preparatory meeting this month, as well as the second Preparatory Committee meeting scheduled for October.

We know that you and your staff share our commitment to fighting injustice and we would welcome the opportunity to meet with your office to discuss this historic conference. We look forward to hearing from your office as we are eager to discuss the government's plans on this matter. If you have any questions, please contact Ejim Dike, Director of the Human Rights Project at the Urban Justice Center, edike@urbanjustice.org or 646-602-5628.

Sincerely,

Organizations

Advocates for Environmental Human Rights
Center for Community Alternatives
Center for Constitutional Rights
Cidadao Global | Global Citizen
Coalition for Asian American Children and Families
Global Rights – *Partners for Justice*
Human Rights Advocates
Human Rights Project at the Urban Justice Center
Latin American and Caribbean Community Center
Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute
National Economic and Social Rights Initiative
Penal Reform International
The Center for Social Inclusion
The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity
WILD for Human Rights
Women of Color Policy Network

Individuals (organizations/affiliations listed for identification purposes only)

State Senator Bill Perkins
New York State Senate

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Brenda Stokely
NY Solidarity Coalition with Katrina & Rita Survivors,
and the Million Worker March Movement

Melba Smith
World Conference Against Racism participant

Sali Vickie Casanova
Black People Against Police Torture,
and Chicago Conference of Black Lawyers

Dr. Barbara Ransby
University of Illinois at Chicago

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