

Statement by Mr. Saeed Fotohi nia on behalf of Youth Against Racism
For WGEPAD mid-way point
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Friends, Colleagues, Brothers and Sisters,

To quote MLK: "The Negro is still not Free." When I met the Reverend Doctor Jesse Jackson in Durban at the World Conference Against Racism, Xenophobia and Related Intolerances, I came upon a nerve in American, and you can say World, History that I had not known there was. A livid nerve of injustice and downtrodden cycles of poverty and despair. The good Reverend Jackson shook the core of my foundations and told me to sit down and think of the many fabled marches of Birmingham and Washington. And you know what? MLK paid his life for that.



The life we live as Civil Rights activists is never easy or comfortable. It is in the South, in the Favelas, in the Malaria-infected outskirts of polite society where they watch the ladies come and go speaking of Michelangelo.

Brothers and Sisters, Colleagues, and Friends, mine are not the words of a detached observer but rather of a brother-in-arms, one whose hands were forged in the mighty fires began by a simple act of sitting down. 'Yes, I'm sitting down now, my feet hurt.' This is the hill I will die on. And with these shoulders I shall raise an empire.

Well let me tell you, ladies and gentlemen, here we are, in 2020 and we have only each other to thank for the resplendent progress we have already made. As I look across the room, I can see the story of the many sacrifices and slights you've had to pass through; I see that determination and the grit that demands more than just empty words from a pulpit. Wars cannot be started, or stopped, by words. Deeds, substantive measurable reforms, these are the stuff of change.

I come to you asking for help. In Durban, my NGO, Youth Against Racism, spearheaded the Youth Summit that ran parallel to both the WCAR and the NGO summit. I ask you now to lend your support to such an undertaking for the 2021 Review of WCAR, which Youth Against Racism has tabled to the OHCHR.

Thank you.

Piedmont, Canada
18 November 2020