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MID-TERM REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF IDPAD

Background

The International Decade for People of African Descent (IDPAD) was the natural successor to the International Year for People of African Descent (IYPAD) (2011). Our two organizations were closely involved in the planning and organizing which led to the IYPAD and IDPAD coming out of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent (WGPAD). We saw the IDPAD as a vehicle to force the U.N. to continue pushing for implementation of the Durban Declaration and Program of Action from the 2001 World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR). One of the major achievements of the DDPA was the declaration of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery as a Crime against Humanity for which reparations were due the descendants of the victims. The WEO Group's continuing attempts to disappear the DDPA since its birth include a refusal to use the term "reparations" in relationship to anything concerning African people. The theme "Recognition, Justice and Development" was the compromise language reached in order to move the declaration of the IYPAD and IDPAD. The idea behind the IDPAD was to keep an international focus on the situation of African people, and to have the member states address and resolve the racist oppression and forced underdevelopment we face.

The IDPAD was following the precedent set by the U.N.'s International Decades of the World's Indigenous People.

Our Activities:

During this period we have held programs, organized demonstrations around fundamental human rights violations suffered by African people in the U.S., including areas of: state-sanctioned violence; health care, housing, employment, wealth creation, and education. Following are a few examples:

December 2014. We organized a major program to publicize the beginning of IDPAD. It was held at Harlem's historic Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture and featured presentations on the IDPAD and cultural performances by leading jazz artists.

February, 2015 We held a program commemorating the 1968 Orangeburg Massacre connecting it to the Ferguson Missouri Rebellion around the police murder of Michael Brown

June 2015 Juneteenth Commemoration and the issue of Reparations

January 2016, met with the WGPAD during their visit to U.S. made presentation re Demand for Reparations

December 2016 A Tribute to Iman Drammeh, filmmaker, activist, head of The Drammeh Institute, an EcoSoc accredited NGO which defends the human rights of African people.

Nov. 2017 participated in WEO Regional IDPAD review meeting in Geneva

In March 2018, we held a Tribunal on Ethnic Cleansing of Black communities across the U.S. The Tribunal's findings were sent to several U.N. special human rights mechanisms

May 2018, I contributed at a government-sponsored conference on IDPAD and Reparations in Caracas, Venezuela

We have continued to hold programs and raise the issue of reparations to the community. In 2018-19, we followed up with the Democratic Presidential hopefuls who claimed to support reparations for African people.

The U.S. Failure to Act

To our knowledge the U.S. Government has conducted no IDPAD activities. On the contrary, the government has created even more oppressive conditions for African people in the U.S. A green light has been given to expression of "in your face racism." The latest and clearest example of the unapologetic white supremacist U.S. policy can be seen in the disproportionately fatal effects which the Corona virus has had in Black communities across the U.S.

According to the New York Times, as of the end of April: *"On April 6, Louisiana became one of the first states to release Covid-19 data by race: While making up 33 percent of the population, African-Americans accounted for 70 percent of the dead at that point. Around the same time, other cities and states began to release racial data in the absence of even a whisper from the federal government — where health data of all kinds is routinely categorized by race. Areas with large populations of black people were revealed to have disproportionate, devastating death rates. In Michigan, black people make up 14 percent of the population but 40 percent of the deaths. (All data was current as of press time.) In Wisconsin, black people are 7 percent of the population but 33 percent of the deaths. In Mississippi, black people are 38 percent of the population but 61 percent of the deaths. In Milwaukee, black people are 39 percent of the population but 71 percent of the deaths. In Chicago, black people are 30 percent of the population but 56 percent of the deaths. In New York, which has the country's highest numbers of confirmed cases and deaths, black people are twice as likely to die as white people. In Orleans Parish, black people make up 60 percent of the population but 70 percent of the dead. Data from the Louisiana*

Department of Health shows that neighborhoods in the parish with large numbers of black residents have been hit hardest.”¹

Historically one of the biggest problems of documenting patterns of racial human rights violations in the U.S. has been the continued refusal of the U.S. to keep national statistics broken down in racial categories on issues such as police killings. The same disregard for racial documentation is being replicated in the Corona pandemic. Even with the limited state and local statistics becoming available, it is clear how the toxic mixture of the history of U.S. slavery, white supremacy and structural racism have so marginalized the health conditions of its Black population that the COVID-19 pandemic appears **weaponized** against it. This seemingly genocidal reality was acknowledged by the New York Times which concluded in the article cited above, “[T]hough these health disparities [for Black people] are certainly worsened by poverty, they are not erased by increased income and education. The elevated rates of these serious illnesses have *weaponized the coronavirus* to catastrophic effect in black America.”

On April 6th we sent a letter to U.N. Secretary-General Guterres requesting Security Council action to force the U.S. to deal with its racially discriminatory approach to dealing with the Pandemics effects on the Black community. It was also copied to several human rights special mechanisms.

Conclusion

During the last five years of this decade, the international community must pressure the U.S. to fulfill its human rights responsibilities to African people, particularly in the area of healthcare. One major proposal is to support the demand for a National Health Care system. We in civil society will continue to do our work to educate, mobilize and protect our communities. We have no choice

Roger S. Wareham

International Secretary-General
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¹ Villarose, Linda & Harris, L. Kasimu, “A Terrible Price: The Deadly Racial Disparities of Covid-19 in America,” NY Times May 3, 2020