



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
26 May 2022

English only

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## Human Rights Council

Fiftieth session

13 June–8 July 2022

Agenda item 9

**Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance: follow-up to and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action**

### **Written statement\* submitted by Arab European Forum for Dialogue and Human Rights, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[10 May 2022]

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\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.



## **The exacerbation of the crisis of racism and the suffering of refugees at the periphery of the Ukrainian war**

The Ukrainian crisis revealed many gaps and weaknesses in the international human rights system, whether in terms of facing the war crimes resulting from the Russian Federation's military invasion of Ukrainian lands, or the resulting humanitarian violations against migrants or asylum-seekers, specifically by the media. Media showed prejudice and racism against Arabs and people of dark skin, in addition to not allowing some of them to cross the Ukrainian borders and get a chance to live in a safe place in the countries receiving immigrants and refugees away from war states.

Racist coverage appeared in the international media, which shamefully compared the tragedy of the United States of America's invasion of Iraq and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. They said that the Ukrainian people are not Iraqi or Syrian, which is a violation of the principle of equality which is major in committing to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which stipulates full equality among all human beings.

Perhaps it was remarkable that the same words came out from a former Ukrainian Deputy Prosecutor General, who said we regret seeing the death of Europeans with blue eyes and blond hair. A reporter on a French channel also stated the same concept when he compared between Ukrainian and Arab refugees saying that we are not talking about Syrian refugees, we're talking about Europeans.

As for the British ITV correspondent, she described Ukraine as not a developing country or a third world nation. This is Europe.

The dissemination of such racist expressions is a clear violation of Article 4 of the International Convention against Racial Discrimination, which states that the states parties to the convention condemn all propaganda and organizations based on ideas or theories that claim the superiority of any race or group of one color or ethnic origin, or that attempt to justify or reinforce any form of racial hatred and racial discrimination, and undertake to take immediate positive measures aimed at eliminating all incitement to such discrimination and every act of it. They also undertake, in particular, in order to achieve this aim and with due regard to the principles contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the rights expressly established in Article 5 of this agreement, the following:

(a) considering all dissemination of concepts based on racial superiority or racial hatred, all incitement to racial discrimination and any act of violence or incitement to such acts committed against any race or group of other color or ethnic origin, as well as any assistance to racist activities, including its funding, a punishable offence.

With the waves of displacement, there were Arabs who were in Ukraine for work or education, and many sources talk about being discriminated against in crossing the border areas to escape the bloody clashes, and that discrimination was against Arab and African nationalities and hundreds of them were arrested at the borders of Ukraine's neighboring countries. Thus, Poland required citizens of countries outside the European Union to contact their embassies in Ukraine to secure their exit and to hold valid travel and residence documents in Ukraine before they were allowed to enter the country for only 15 days before going back to their homeland.

Discrimination is clearer in the European Union's treatment of the wave of Ukrainian asylum compared to other nationalities, for example, Poland built fortifications on its borders to stop the passage of immigration through its borders with Belarus and put them for months at the borders in inhumane conditions.

The European Union moved quickly in the Ukrainian case and got rid of the bureaucracy of asylum applications. The countries of the Union dropped their guard and received Ukrainian refugees without requests and even gave them the opportunity to stay in the European Union for 90 days without a visa. For the first time, the European Union is going to use the law "temporarily granting collective protection" to extend the status of refugees' residence in a non-bureaucratic manner.

The European Union started to set up a fixed distribution mechanism for refugees from Ukraine, while the Ukrainian government spoke of the European Union's agreement to receive Ukrainian refugees for three years without requiring them to submit asylum applications. This is completely different from the European Union's handling of the refugee crises that followed the conflict in the southern Mediterranean, the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq, or migrants from African countries, which involves discrimination and a complete violation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which stipulates that all human beings are equal before the law and have an equal right to be protected from any discrimination and any incitement to discrimination.

Racist campaigns are expanding even inside Ukraine against Chinese citizens and other nationalities according to their governments' support for Kyiv or refraining to comment, while other nationalities are exposed to problems related to the bullying the citizens are subjected to due to the positions of countries related to their interests, which are not the fault of a citizen.

Instead of the Western media demanding the application of human rights standards in dealing with the Ukrainian crisis, achieving equality between all refugees and not imposing restrictions on all refugees, they followed a discourse devoid of impartiality and media standards for independent and impartial coverage stipulated in international conventions. They revealed a racist discourse based on discrimination, violation of the human rights and dignity, and double standards in the application of human rights standards, whether through statements by official figures or by journalists and correspondents affiliated with large western media organizations, using some phrases and sentences indicating this discrimination.

The principles of human rights protect the rights of all human beings with their differences in recognition of the human right to life, liberty and security. These principles protected the right not to be subjected to any inhuman or cruel treatment of any kind, and the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees guaranteed the rights of all refugees without discrimination on the basis of religion, ethnicity or domicile, and the rights of all refugees to work, education, adequate housing and other basic services, with refugees not being returned to the dangerous conditions from which they fled and which might expose them to persecution.

The International Organization for Migration criticized the exposure of foreigners fleeing Ukraine after the Russian military intervention to racism and discrimination in the countries in which they sought refuge and expressed its concern about reports related to the exposure of foreigners who left Ukraine to neighboring countries to racism, discrimination and violence. It also stressed its unequivocal rejection of all forms of discrimination. The organization also demanded the concerned countries to investigate incidents of racism.

A number of international organizations also expressed their dissatisfaction with the incidents of discrimination against Ukrainian refugees in neighboring countries. They noted that "the statements of some journalists about the differentiation between Ukrainians and the rest of the refugees reflect the racism of abhorrent ignorance, disgusting to the extreme."

While representatives of the three African countries in the UN Security Council - Kenya, Ghana and Gabon - all denounced the discrimination against African citizens at the Ukrainian border, noting widespread reports from African students fleeing the country saying that they faced apartheid, racism and abuse.

They demanded that the mistreatment of African people on Europe's borders stops immediately, both for Africans fleeing Ukraine and for those crossing the Mediterranean."

We are reminding of the need to alertness during armed conflicts and the call of the African Union to respect international law, which requires equal treatment of all people who cross international borders in conflict areas."

The United Nations should warn the media to abide by professional standards in independent media coverage during armed conflicts and to reveal the violations that refugees are exposed to as media practices are a part of the war itself, not to exalt racism among peoples, not to violate and destroy the basic principles of human rights based on the principle of equality between all human beings, and to avoid violating the principles of freedom and

objectivity by siding with a specific human element in a clear violation of the principles of the United Nations and the values of human rights in which all human beings are equal. This equality means equality in the same rights and rejection of racism, discrimination and facing double standards according to all international charters and the contents of the International Bill of Human Rights.

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Arab Network for Digital Media and Human Rights, NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.