

## **FORUM ON MINORITY ISSUES**

**First Session, 15 & 16 December 2008**

**All For Reparations and Emancipation, AFRE**

**Speaker: Mr. Silis Muhammad**

**Agenda Item VI. The Relationship Between De-Segregation Strategies, Cultural Autonomy and Integration  
in the Quest for Social Cohesion**

**Greetings Madam Chair, Madam Gay McDougall, Experts, Country Representatives, Scholars and  
Minorities:**

**One of the purposes of this Forum is the  
identification of challenges and problems  
facing minorities and States.**

**We, Afrodescendants, want for ourselves and  
for our children an education, especially now  
at our inception as an internationally  
recognized human family. We want an education  
in our original (mother) tongue. UN scholars  
state that language, not just any language,  
but one's "mother tongue" is intimately bound  
with identity. Thus, the right to such an  
education is an identity right.**

**Article 1, Section 1.1 of the Declaration on  
the Rights of Persons Belonging to Minorities  
indicates States shall protect and promote  
the identity of minorities. The United States  
of America, mainly, as well as other States,  
have breached this United Nations  
obligation.**

**Since the abolition of slavery until now,  
Afrodescendants have been denied  
self-identity: education in our mother  
tongue. It is the very dignity we are**

without. The former slave-holding States have a duty to protect not only the existence but the national, ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of Minorities.

Mr. M. Cherif Bassiouni stated in his final report to the 56th session of the CHR that economic compensation for victims of gross violations of human rights should be provided for any assessable damage resulting from violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, lost opportunities, including education.

Since we were forcibly deprived of our mother tongue due to slavery and its lingering effects, we want compensation from those States, especially the US, responsible for denying us an education intimately bound with identity.

Afrodescendants claim the right to compensation for violations of international law, articulated in the Declaration on the Rights of Minorities as well as Article 27 of the ICCPR, due to lost opportunities, including education.

In conclusion, we suggest that the regional forums for Afrodescendants, started under the auspices of the former Working Group on Minorities, be continued so that Afrodescendants can discuss practical, acceptable and adaptable solutions to the unique problems we face. Thank you.