

World Council of Churches, Commission of the Churches on International Affairs

The United States has seen a surge of systemic racism, profiling and discrimination of people of color, particularly people of African descent. Perhaps the most egregious acts of anti-black discrimination has been perpetuated by the state itself in the form of police brutality and state-sanctioned violence against black and brown bodies. In 2012, the Black Lives Matter movement was birthed by young black women in response to the murder of Trayvon Martin and the inaction by the criminal justice system to properly prosecute his killer.

Since, many more black bodies have been brutalized by law enforcement in the United States without consequence, and the Black Lives Matter movement has ballooned into a rallying cry for young people, by young people, exercising our constitutional right to peacefully protest the devaluing of black lives and the lives of any and all marginalized peoples, including ethnic, religious, gender, and sexual minorities.

As a result of the wide participation and activism by youth around the Black Lives Matter movement, the U.S. saw the number of unarmed black men killed by police cut in half in 2016, yet those killings still fail to yield legal recourse. Likewise, the movement's success has come under attack by alt-right, neo-Nazi white supremacist factions that have seen a resurgence since the U.S. presidential election.

These opposition groups aim to delegitimize the Black Lives Matter movement by falsely portraying it as a pro-violence, anti-white hate group, which could not be further from the truth. I want to appreciate the UN in legitimizing the movement for black lives in all disenfranchised peoples of the United States and its invitation to Black Lives Matter to address the UN General Assembly in 2016. Likewise, I thank the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent for its thorough investigation and report of anti-black sentiment in the U.S in 2016. However, I also want to caution the UN that its work cannot end in statements that do not yield change. I encourage the UN to continue to apply pressure to the US government to be accountable to people of color and to invest in the activism of young people for racial justice in the United States by first making sure that they are represented in these forums. Thank you.