



Committee: Third Committee – Social, Humanitarian & Cultural

Topic: Elimination of Racism

Country: Mauritania

Delegate:

School:

It is strikingly appalling to note that racism and related intolerance could be traced back from the time of the Greek philosopher Aristotle (c. 384 BC), when he stated that Greeks were free by nature and all other considered “barbarians”. This form of differentiation often resulted in acts of racism and unaccepted variances within humankind. Race discrimination has been the centre of slavery practice which dated back 3500 BC, when Africans were deemed slaves due to the nature of their coloured skin. Unfortunately, this isn’t just history, it has been shamelessly present in our society, and it has been manifested in several different ways to date, such as racial segregation movement called Apartheid, present in South Africa between 1948-1994, and the endless search for gender equality around the world.

However, the list does not end there, Xenophobia is another form of intolerance where communities discriminate against foreigners and migrants joining into their land. According to a recent study carried out by the UN, out of the 105 countries researched, only 54% had policies on migrant rights. In addition, income inequality is another source of intolerance amongst people and countries, and it is a major obstacle for poorer (developing) countries’ progress.

In Mauritania, a Western African country, there are plenty ways racism exists, including all types of intolerance mentioned above. Due to the fact that Mauritania is one of the biggest and least known countries in Africa, coupled with the fact that it is one of the 10th least visited countries in the world, it comes with no surprise that all this intolerance comes to life and it is not well monitored or known by other countries or world authorities.

Mauritania’s past does involve wars and several conquerors and for a poor country the impact of its history was vital, and consequences of its colonisation remains today. France had colonised it from the 1850s and Mauritania only became self-governed in 1958 and fully independent in 1960. However, the country was far from being free from misery.



Besides, even though Mauritania is a country with a small population of 4.5 million, it has several Afroasiatic languages such as French, Niger-Congo and the unique Arabic dialect of Berber, Pulaar, Soninké and Wolof, whereas Arabic is the official language. Therefore, the presence of mixed cultures and backgrounds fostered discriminatory behaviour. In 2017, members of the government pointed to NGOs (non-governmental organisations) present in the country that the authorities had full respect to human rights and operated within a civil society. Nevertheless, one of the existent laws in place since 1964 is the requirement for groups of campaigners on problems of ethnic or discrimination to obtain authorisation from the Ministry of Interior to exist legally. Refusal can happen simply for being “unwelcome influence on the minds of people”. Therefore, it can be noted a very limiting “freedom from expression” society in reality, even though Mauritania had attempted to contribute to the fight against racial discrimination when it opposed to Apartheid and participated in the Durban Conference in 2001.

In May 2018, the UN committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination concluded an implementation of the provisions of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Cheikh Tourad Ould Abdel Malick, Commissioner for Human Rights of Mauritania, noted that

“Mauritania had relevant judicial and institutional frameworks to combat racial discrimination”, since the notion of non-discrimination was added in the 1991 Constitution, but the president of the National Commission for Human Rights of Mauritania, Irabiha Abdel Wedoud criticised this assumption and recommended further government efforts towards racial discrimination and change social attitudes and mentality.

In addition, in November 2014 Mauritania had circa 50,000 refugees and there were still no specific laws on refugees rights, and most measures so far taken in Mauritania are aimed towards women more than other groups which are discriminated for the colour of their skin and religion, such as the marginalised groups of the Haratines (black Moors).

As per the UN Sustainable Development Goals of the UN (number 10) of *“Reduced inequality within and among countries”*, if Mauritania really wants to tackle all sorts of discrimination the country needs to look beyond the “obvious” and its geographic



boundaries; they need to partner with the surrounding countries. In conclusion, the types of measures which could be resolvable with the aid of the UN and other countries are as follows:

1. Harmonising discrimination laws within neighbouring countries;
2. Define how to enforce the law – via co-operation of laws;
3. Intelligence - share information with neighbouring countries and criminal information;
4. Invest in helpline for young girls or marginalised groups in Mauritania (prevention of vulnerable people).

By combing forces with its closest countries, Mauritania can make significant progress in any racial or related intolerance discrimination. Together they can do it within Western Africa.

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