

**U.S. Helsinki Commission Briefing
Europeans of African Descent 'Black Europeans' - Race, Rights, & Politics
November 19, 2013**

**Remarks by
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Recent Census figures have confirmed that migration into Ireland continues and that numbers of non-Irish foreign nationals have increased in the period since the last Census of 2006. The number of Irish residents who were born outside Ireland continues to increase and stood at 766,770 in 2011 an increase of 25 per cent on 2006, and accounting for 17 per cent of the population (CSO 2011). The population of Africans is at 41,642 or 0.91% of the total population

Akina Dada wa Africa (AkiDwa), Swahili for sisterhood, is a national network of migrant women living in Ireland. The organisation was established in 2001 by a group of African women to address isolation, racism and Gender Based Violence that they were experiencing at that time. AkiDwa works for a just society where there is equal opportunity and equal access to resources in all aspects of society: social, cultural, economic, civic and political.

Given the current statistics on racism and racial incidents in Ireland, it is clear that strong racist attitudes and deep rooted prejudices still exist within Irish society. In order to protect people that are vulnerable to racism, xenophobia and hate crime political will and commitment are needed from top.

In **radio interview** in November 2011 Cllr Scully – Public representative and former Mayor of NAAS said that he would no longer represent “black Africans” living in his area, he implied they are "aggressive" "bad manners

THREE IN every five of the TDs (Irish Member of Parliament) responding to a survey carried out by a professional polling company said they had encountered racist sentiments while canvassing in 2011 general election. More than a third of the TDs surveyed said ‘speaking out in favour of immigrant rights would have a negative effect on their constituency support– February 2012- Irish Times

ALMOST 50 per cent of teachers have reported a racist incident in their school or college in the past month, according to a new survey by the Teachers' Union of Ireland, April 2010

2009 Economic research institute and Equality Authority- research on employment showed strong discrimination in Ireland, people whose name is not Irish, most racist attitude directed to black African.

Racism in Media: Reporting take extremely subtle forms, such as racial stereotyping and paying a disproportionate level of attention to stories which paint people from minority ethnic communities in a negative light- for example Kevin Myers Irish Journalist and Writer in 2008 wrote an article on Irish Independent paper, *Africa has given the world **nothing but AIDS***. Representation of immigrant and black people in particular is completely lacking in mainstream media.

Women members continue to report to AkiDwA of their daily experiences of racism (verbal, physical) in their residence, while walking on the street or trying to access services. Many women also have to struggle with managing racism directed to them and to their children and majority would keep their children indoors or remain indoors rather than getting out as they feel insecure. Many women members of AkiDwA have expressed reluctance to report racist incidents to Gardaí (police) with reasons that they get a feeling of intimidation at Garda stations where they are asked of their immigration status and treated with suspicion. **Racism** while trying to accessing public services takes many different forms, such as the manner and tone used by officials, prejudiced behaviour and being denied service

Participation: Democratic participation by immigrants is lacking. About 12% of the population are from immigrant backgrounds. Many immigrants are involved in religious and community organisations but have yet to see their involvement represented in decision-making. Immigrant participation at the local level is believed to be one of the most important and effective measures, since it leads to a better understanding of shared values and respect for cultural differences, both of which are essential for democratic development. AkiDwA is working on grassroots **mobilisation** among the Immigrant community to encourage and ensure that Immigrants are involved at all levels of decision making.

Education: The exemption in Ireland's equality legislation that allows religious schools to give preference to children of the school's faith in order to preserve the "ethos" of the school has had a disproportionately negative impact on children from minority ethnic groups who are also members of minority religious communities, as the vast majority of State-run religious schools are Catholic, the predominant religion in the State. In 2007 immigrant children were left stranded without school places. Educate together schools have been established and have now largely accommodated children from the ethnic minority community. Mainstream schools need to be properly resourced to meet the diversity of students. There is also a need to have a reflection of diversity within the education curriculum that should be reviewed while handling Racist Bullying in schools need to be **prioritised**, all schools should adopt anti-racism policies that identify the steps that will be taken to address racist bullying when it occurs.

Access to 3rd level education: Inability for children living in direct provision (of families seeking asylum) to access 3rd level education due to high cost without State support. They are also not allowed to access any vocational training or courses run by bodies funded by the Government (example FAS).

Immigration and Asylum law and policy: The 2001 World Conference on Racial Discrimination affirmed that racism directed against noncitizens, particularly migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, constitutes one of the main forms of contemporary racism; impact of direct provision on people, length of time, lack of independent complain procedure, food, right to work, all that constitute basic needs, poverty, bringing up children in crowded environment impact on mental health, physical and psychological well-being.

Citizenship: The citizenship referendum in 2004 got huge support almost 80 % NO vote, children born after that year are left with no right to citizenship in their country of birth and many parents within the asylum process have to apply for asylum for children born here. Negative responses are therefore given to applications from such parents for full social welfare allowance, family income supplement and other social welfare payments.

Recommendations:

Legal protection: acts of racism and unlawful racial discrimination, including incitement of racial hatred and racist attacks are serious violations of human rights and should be combated by all lawful means. Need for Ireland to have legislation on racist crimes, to show that it would be sufficient to prosecute effectively and adequately racist type violence. Come up with a legislation framework. This process should clearly define racism as a crime and ensure that the racially-aggravated dimensions of crimes committed are considered in sentencing.

Education and awareness raising: Encourage the introduction of human rights education, including promoting anti-racism in the school curriculum and in institutions of higher education. Equality statement and anti-racism awareness is important at all levels of the society

Support: Women's human rights and necessary protections, with regard to racism and discrimination, must be ensured through gender mainstreaming of existing legislation and policies and consideration of gender provided within new legislation. Equality of participation and outcomes must be measured quantifiably within government services and include gender breakdowns. The government should commit itself to responding to the specific needs of migrant women by providing culturally appropriate services and support in relation, for example, to Female genital mutilation, Sexual abuse, Domestic violence (including the creation of refuges for ethnic minority and migrant women), forced marriages.

Improve reporting: Establish a 'national racist reporting and monitoring' system that is independent of the Gardaí, and that enables reporting of racist incidents other than those currently defined as crimes. It is particularly important that this system is widely advertised, and data analysed and disseminated on a regular basis.

Monitoring: Establish an Independent monitoring of public bodies to assess their role in exacerbating negative racial and ethnic profiling.

Research: Good policy can only be informed by good research. There is still a gap concerning the Irish government's response to both racism and recording of incidences.

Policies and practices: Develop racial equality policy and practice not only in theory but also in action, including mainstreaming the fight against racism in policies, and acting in partnership with civil society