

Research Report

COMMITTEE : HRC

ISSUE : Building a better relationship between authorities and minorities.

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Building a better relationship between authorities and minorities.

INTRODUCTION

Minority issues have been on the agenda of the United Nations for more than 60 years. Already in 1948, the General Assembly declared that the United Nations could not remain indifferent to the fate of minorities. For more than 80 years, minorities have been victims of armed conflicts, internal strife, discrimination and have lacked access to, among other things, adequate housing, land and property, and even a nationality. The United Nations identified the following as “major concerns” regarding minorities : survival and existence, promotion and protection of the identity of minorities, equality and non-discrimination, and effective and meaningful participation. It encourages all States to address these issues.

KEY WORDS

Minorities : “The term minority as used in the United Nations human rights system usually refers to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, pursuant to the United Nations Minorities Declaration. All States have one or more minority groups within their national territories, characterized by their own national, ethnic, linguistic or religious identity, which differs from that of the majority population.”

Authorities : According to *Oxford Languages*, an authority is “a person or organization having political or administrative power and control.”

UNHRC : Human Rights Council - “The United Nations Human Rights Council is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system made up of 47 States responsible for the promotion and protection of all human rights around the globe.”

OHCHR : Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights - “promotes and protects the full range of human rights and freedoms set out in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.”

Genocide : “The deliberate killing of a large number of people from a particular nation or ethnic group with the aim of destroying that nation or group.” - *Oxford Languages*

Education : “Is the process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits.”

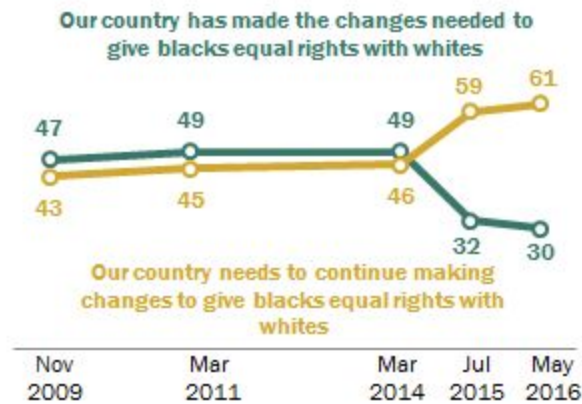
OVERVIEW

SURVIVAL AND EXISTENCE

The 2001 Durban Declaration affirms that “the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of minorities, where they exist, must be protected and that persons belonging to such minorities should be treated equally and enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination of any kind”. Yet, even in the more developed countries of the world, discrimination persists. A study from *Pew Research Center* showed that 61% of Americans believed that their country had “yet to achieve racial equality”.

About six-in-ten Americans say more changes needed to achieve racial equality

% saying ...



Note: Voluntary responses of “Neither/Both equally” and “Don’t know/Refused” not shown.
 Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 29-May 8, 2016.
 Q6F2.
 “On Views of Race and Inequality, Blacks and Whites are Worlds Apart”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2016/06/21/3-discrimination-and-racial-inequality/st_2016-06-27_race-inequality-ch3-01/

The OHCHR believes that the “lack of respect for, lack of protection and lack of fulfilment of the rights of minorities may be at least a contributing factor if not the primary cause of displacement and may—in the worst cases—even lead to the extinction of such communities.” Moreover, in 2004, former Secretary-General of the United Nations Kofi Annan stated “We must protect especially the rights of minorities, since they are genocide’s most frequent target.” To this day, in

some cases, minorities are still victims of genocide : for example, the Dinka-Nuer conflict in South Sudan. According to *The Washington Post*, over 380 000 people have been murdered and nearly 4 million have been displaced.



<https://i.insider.com/5a159ae1f914c34f018b59c7?width=700&format=jpeg&auto=webp>

EDUCATION

Education is an inalienable human right. It is a human right that is crucial to the realization of a wide array of other human rights. Furthermore, it represents an essential support for community identity : it allows for individuals and communities to lift themselves out of poverty and, according to the OHCHR, “a means of helping minorities to overcome the legacies of historical injustice or discrimination committed against them”.

A report published by the *Forum on Minority Issues* suggests that “minorities in various regions of the world suffer disproportionately from unequal or restricted access to quality education”. It is believed that lack of education leads to denial of civil and political rights, including rights to freedom of movement and freedom of expression. Lack of education also “limits the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, including rights to employment, health, housing and an adequate standard of living”.

Ultimately, the lack of education results “in reticence to engage with law enforcement authorities, inhibiting access to remedies when human rights are violated”. It is therefore crucial to find solutions to ensure that everyone has access to quality education.

SOCIETY

Modern society is born as a result of constant changes and cultural advances.

What must be retained from this journey through the history of the evolution of society is that it is specific to a country, and therefore to a culture, a language, a religion and an ethnic group (which are the four main branches).

These 4 groups then form a "solidarity" of the society, which takes a very important place in the movements of demonstrations, because they acquire more and more influence and importance in societies where the individual was at the centre of concerns.

And in spite of the very different social statuses from one person to another, these values have made it possible to bring groups of people together to bring us into the situation in which we find ourselves, where freedom is the pillar of our values.

In spite of this, some groups still find it difficult to make their voices heard by their states, because they are a minority and therefore have little influence.

It is also important to know that today's society is made up of 4 groups. A good understanding of these four aspects allows us to better recognize their stakes :

-The cultural group

is a community of people sharing the same ideological aspects. It is common to link them to ethnic groups.

-The language group

is a group of people speaking the same language. They bring a cultural and ethnic richness to a state.

-The religious group

is a group of people practising the same religion. In a state, two types of religious groups are recognised: the predominant group and the secondary groups. In the West, the predominant religious group is Christianity and the secondary groups are Islam and Judaism.

-The ethnic group

is a group of people acknowledging that they share the same language and culture (i.e. ethnicity). Some linguistic and cultural minorities can be considered to be ethnic minorities.

The importance of the relationship between minorities and the authorities in our society

It is to ensure the protection of the rights of minority groups that the authorities must maintain a good relationship with them. If the freedoms of minorities are respected, irrespective of their language, culture, religion or ethnicity, then they will be able to exercise their rights on an equal footing with other groups: it is therefore imperative that the authorities promote the protection of their rights. In some countries, their freedoms are severely curtailed and members of minority groups find themselves victims of long-term discrimination, inequality and exclusion. This phenomenon raises many issues: refugees who are excluded or returning to their country are often left out.

GOVERNEMENT

The government is a key factor in the relationship between the authorities and minorities. Indeed, it is the key to communication between them. It exercises executive power within a country and monitors it. A government based on good foundations (laws, procedures, freedoms) will have a fair and controlled executive branch.

This is why the study of governments allows a better approach to our problems and a better understanding of the essential values to be supported.

MAIN INTERNATIONAL ACTORS

CHINA

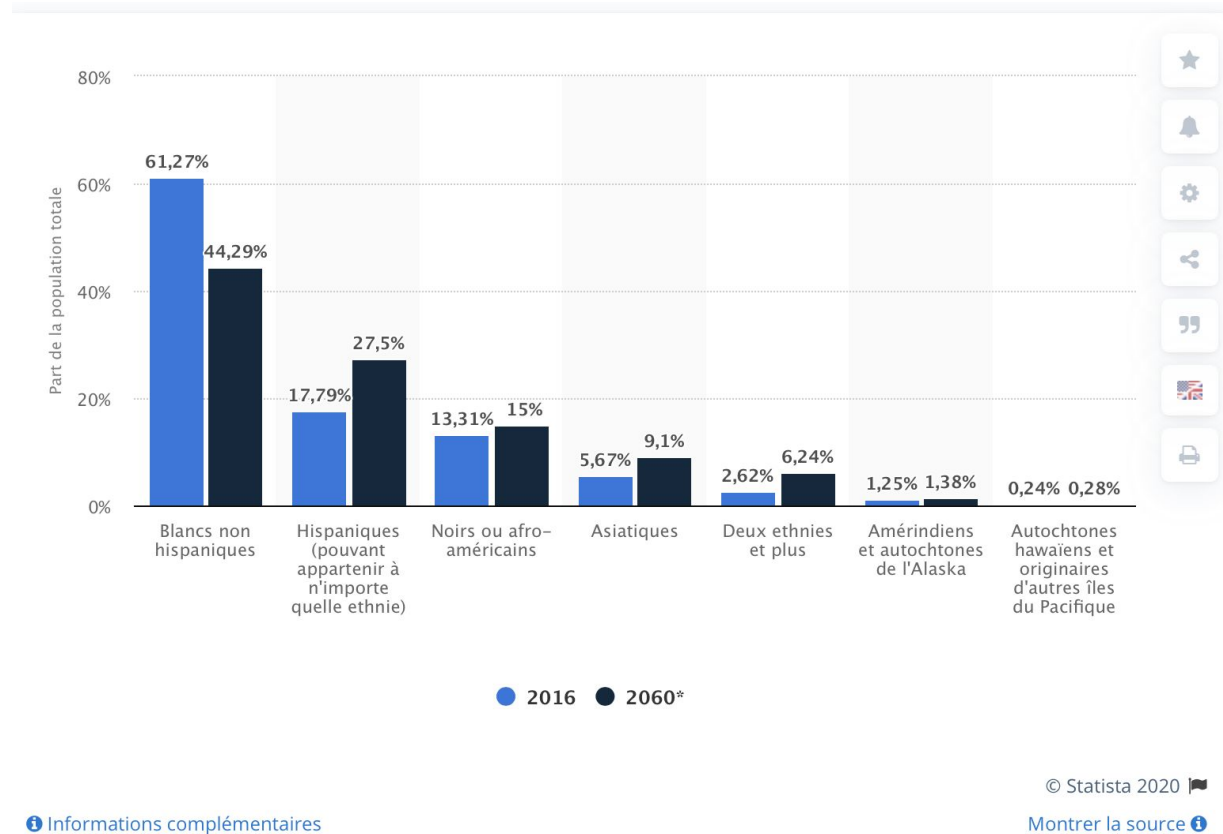
China has currently the largest population in the world, with nearly 1.4 billion inhabitants. This population is divided into ethnic groups (56), one of which is the vast majority, the Han (96% of the population). The rest of the ethnic groups are considered minorities, and many of them are subject to repression, including the Uyghur community, in the Xinjiang region. While in theory Beijing guarantees religious freedom in its constitution (Article 36), the reality is much more complex. The Chinese government exerted repression on these minorities through "re-education camps" and the reconstruction of entire villages, which the authorities considered too extremist. "Sufi representations, characteristic of the Uyghur culture, are also forbidden... Then mosques are occupied, people who grow beards, wear a veil, have the Koran in their homes...etc And then we send Hans cadres to the families of Xinjiang; we very often kidnap children who are placed in orphanages where they are educated according to the good traditions of the Chinese Communist Party. The parents are interned in re-education camps which are called 'vocational training centers' by the official propaganda" according to Jean-Philippe Béja, a french sinologist. Thus, the government is seeking to replace the way of life of a minority with that of the majority (the Hans). But this practice does not stop in territories considered secessionist by the Chinese authorities, it also continues throughout the world, particularly in France. A large number of Uyghur refugees there report pressures from the Beijing government to silence them and reduce the spread of what is happening in this province.

But the position of the authorities with the international community stops all debate : This is an internal Chinese affair, and anyone who wishes to oppose it should declare war to one of the world's greatest powers. The issue is all the more complex given that China, otherwise known as the People's Republic of China, is a communist dictatorship, openly hostile to Western's conceptions of individual liberties, policies and interventions. Therefore, the country does not guarantee freedom of expression, and reserves the right, on the international stage, to reveal only those figures that benefit them.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

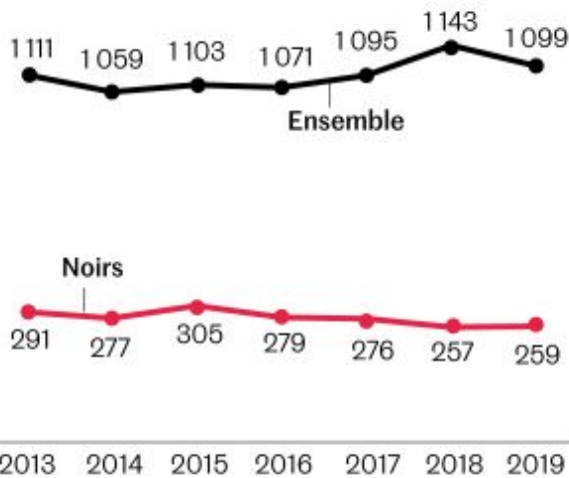
The United States is a multicultural nation populated mostly by migrants. Throughout history, the country has been marked by systemic discrimination and the practice of slavery. It was ultimately in 1865, after the end of the Civil War, that slavery was abolished and, in theory, racial inequalities as well. But in practice, in this country populated mostly by white people (61.7% of non-Hispanic whites, according to Statista 2020), inequalities persist, and this is what

the Black lives matter crisis in 2020 revealed. Several Afro-Americans (a minority group, representing 13.31% of the population, see diagram below) have been murdered in police blunders (notably George Floyd and Jacob Blake). According to *Le monde* figures, blacks are three times more likely to die than whites during a police intervention in the United States (see graph below). These figures raise multiple weaknesses of the United States on the issue of police violence : The Second Amendment and the carrying of weapons, and thus a normalization of violence in society, the need to reform the police, with a more moderate use of force and justice which seems to be ineffective on the issue of police misconduct.

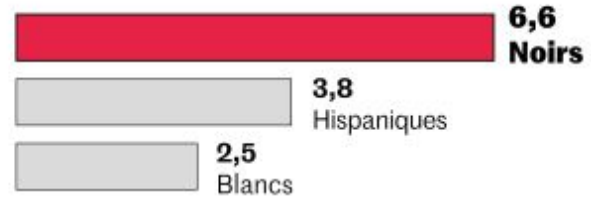


<https://fr.statista.com/statistiques/570757/pourcentage-de-la-population-des-etats-unis-en-et-2060-et-par-origine-hispanique/>

Morts lors d'interventions policières



Nombre de morts lors d'une interpellation policière, pour 1 million d'habitants



99 %

des morts lors d'interpellations policières, entre 2013 et 2019, n'ont débouché sur aucune inculpation des officiers de police mis en cause.

https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2020/06/08/revoltes-aux-etats-unis-l-etincelle-george-floyd_6042140_3210.html

OHCHR

The OHCHR was created in December 1993, by the resolution 48/141 of the General Assembly. Le Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies sur les droits de l'homme a été créé en décembre 1993, par la résolution numéro 48/141 de l'assemblée générale.

Its purpose is to promote and protect the human rights that are guaranteed under international law and stipulated in the *Universal Declaration of Human Right* of 1948. In order to do so, it works with multiple actors such as NGOs (Non Governmental Organizations), states and their authorities (in order to make sure that all rules are respected everywhere and/or, if necessary, help them to achieve this), companies, national institutes (organizations funded by States, charged to protect and promote human rights), other International Organizations (UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF...)

“As the principal United Nations office mandated to promote and protect human rights for all, UN Human Rights:

- Works with and assists Governments in fulfilling their human rights obligations
- Speaks out objectively in the face of human rights violations worldwide
- Provides a forum for identifying, highlighting and developing responses to today's human rights challenges
- Acts as the principal focal point of human rights research, education, public information, and advocacy activities” according to the organization’s website.

EUROPEAN UNION (E.U)

The European Union is committed to respecting the rights of minorities in all its member countries in the framework of the Copenhagen accession criteria (1993) of the said institution. According to Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union (1992) "The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, liberty, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities". Article 49 of the same Treaty specifies the conditions for admission, since "Any European State which respects the values referred to in Article 2 (quoted above) and is committed to promoting them may apply to become a member of the Union".

But these commitments do not stop at membership: they must be maintained as long as the country is a member state. This is for example the case recently when Poland, a member of the European Union, has implemented in some cities a repressive policy towards LGBT minorities, by creating zones "without LGBT ideology". The political alliance reacted immediately, through its Commission, by rejecting requests for European funding on twinning programs. This was done in the framework of a recent law which states that in order to benefit from European funds, countries must respect the fundamental values of the Union.

Additionally, the organization is also engaged diplomatically when it signs bilateral and cooperation agreements since these include a clause concerning human rights. In the case of non respect of the third country, the union reserves the right to impose different measures such as the reduction or suspension of cooperation.

NORTH KOREA (DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF NORTH KOREA)

Independent since 1949 following the successive occupations of the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republic) and Japan, North Korea is nowadays a communist dictatorship openly hostile to all non-totalitarian regimes. Member State of the UN (United Nations) since 1991, the country however, has never been represented in the Human Right Council. Indeed, a country, to be elected in the council, must prove its commitments in Human Rights, which North Korea cannot justify.

In theory, the country wants to be committed to human rights, given that it has signed several conventions (such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, or the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights).

But in reality, UN investigations reveal that these commitments are not respected in their own country. It is notably the research report of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the democratic people's republic of Korea that reveals this ([this document](#)), with practices perpetrated by the authorities ("officials of the State Security Department, the Ministry of People's Security, the Korean People's Army, the Office of the Public Prosecutor, the judiciary and the Workers' Party of Korea, who are acting under the effective control of the central organs of the Workers' Party of Korea, the National Defence Commission and the Supreme Leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea" according to the document above). These different organs use various forms of repression, such as, but not limited to: the use of concentration camps, forced labor, torture... Some of those human right's violations can be considered as crimes against humanity.

The issue of Human Rights in North Korea is therefore very concerning and the committee must take urgent measures to force the country. However, the first barrier to the committee should be

the commitment of the country concerned. Indeed, the North Korea foreign minister said in 2016 that the country will "never ever be bound" by any resolution from the Human Right Council.

TIMELINE

24th October 1945

Creation of the United Nations, the international organisation that replaced the League of Nations. Its objectives are international peace and security. They establish major international treaties on equal rights for men and women that officially protect the rights of minorities.

1st February 1998

Entry into force of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by the [Council of Europe](#) (COE). This convention, which deals with national and European issues, has had international influence and has been closely followed by many non-European countries. They stipulate that "the protection of minorities is part of the universal protection of human rights". The special feature of this convention is that, since minorities vary from country to country, any country that has signed the covenant will be able to adapt the provisions of the convention to the specific situation in their country.

15th March 2006

Creation of the Human Rights Council by the United Nations General Assembly. This Council directs its research and decision-making towards the respect of universal human rights in States. [The Human Rights Council](#) replaced the former UN [Commission on Human Rights](#) founded in 1946. At the origin of their creation they set up the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), a process that serves to "assess the human rights situation in all UN Member States".

RELEVANT UN TREATIES AND EVENTS

10/12/1948

On December 10th 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted in Paris resolution 217 A : *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. It serves as a common standard of achievements for all people and nations. It sets out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected (it has been translated in over 500 languages).

16/12/1966

The General Assembly adopted and opened for signature resolution 2200A (XXI) : *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*.

18/12/1992

The General Assembly adopted resolution 47/135 : *Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities*. It includes a list of rights to which persons belonging to minorities are entitled, including the right to enjoy their own

culture, to profess and practice their own religion and to use their own language. The Declaration reaffirms the rights of persons belonging to minorities to enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the principles of non-discrimination and equality before the law. Other key principles include the protection of existence, promotion and protection of identity, and the right to effective participation.

28/09/2007

On 28 September 2007, the United Nations Human Rights Council established a Forum on Minority Issues.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

The UNHCR envisaged the Forum on Minority Issues providing a platform for dialogue and cooperation on minority issues and mandated it with the task to identify and analyze best practices, challenges, opportunities and initiatives for the further implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities.

Keeping in mind that every person is entitled to accessible, free and high-quality primary level education : education for all students should have an intercultural approach that recognizes and values diversity; there must be a development of intercultural and anti-racist capacity within educational institutions.

Minorities have a right to participate in the life of the State and in the decisions affecting them and their children's future. In the field of education, "this right implies input by minorities into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of education programmes and the administration of educational institutions (...) It also means that an alternative mainstream [curriculum] may be considered in order to meet the needs, aspirations and priorities of minorities".

Moreover, it would seem normal to have school curricula encourage knowledge among students of the history, traditions, language and culture of the minorities existing within their territory.

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