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ORAL STATEMENT

Item 1: Urgent Debate on the “current racially inspired human rights violations, systemic racism, police brutality and the violence against peaceful protest”

UN Human Rights Council
Forty-third regular session

Madam President,

We are outraged; outraged by the abuse of power and arrogant disregard for a Black man’s life even as he pleaded for it over a sickening eight minutes and forty-six seconds. We are outraged that George Floyd, along with Eric Garner, Breonna Taylor and Rayshard Brooks are on a list - that was too long before they joined it - of black and brown people killed at the hands of the police in the United States of America.

We are here because of their deaths, but not only because of their deaths. We are here to stand with those around the world condemning the systemic racism, racial bias, and related violence that have affected the lives of too many for too long in the United States and calling for justice, accountability and systemic reform, turning the mirror on our own countries, societies, and ourselves in an effort to root out racism. We are here to reaffirm something that should not need to be said in 2020: Black Lives Matter.

Just as we condemn racism and discrimination wherever it exists, we support those who are defending their human rights and fundamental freedoms and working, sometimes at great personal sacrifice, including to protect the rights of others. Amnesty International has documented dozens of cases of excessive force by police forces across the United States against peaceful protesters, including inappropriate and at times repressive use of tear gas, pepper spray, and other less-lethal weapons. This is shocking and completely unacceptable conduct.

Madam President,

The United States must urgently set a new standard for justice, policing, and safety and ensure full compliance with the United States’ obligations under international law, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The recent Executive Order on policing falls

far short in this regard.¹ Police must be required to use de-escalation techniques; chokeholds and all maneuvers that restrict blood or oxygen flow to the brain must be banned; and less lethal weapons must only be used where strictly necessary and in line with international use of force standards. There must be better and transparent monitoring, data collection and accountability for officers who abuse their power to eliminate racial and religious profiling and an end to qualified immunity. There must be accessible legal avenues for victims of racial discrimination to challenge systemic discrimination in the criminal justice system.

We call for independent, impartial and transparent investigations into all cases of police use of lethal force in the United States, as well as the unlawful use of force and unduly militarized responses against protesters and journalists in the context of the #BlackLivesMatter protests in the United States.

We are disturbed by reports of threats conveyed in the context of the negotiations of this resolution; no state is above scrutiny and we urge all states to engage based on merit and objective criteria to prevent and address violations wherever they exist, even in powerful countries.

Finally, we call on all States to work to eliminate racism and protect the rights to peaceful protest.

Thank you, Madam President.

¹ <https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/trumps-executive-order-on-policing-falls-flat-on-accountability-for-the-taking-of-black-lives/>.