

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 8, 2020

Ms. Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
1049 Brussels
Belgium

Re: Situation of Black Europeans and People of African Descent in Europe

Dear President von der Leyen,

We are writing as Members of United States Congress to call on the European Commission to take urgent action to combat racism, discrimination and police violence against Black Europeans and People of African Descent in Europe. We would also like to express our concern and call for an immediate inquiry into the physical harassment of a Black Member of European Parliament, Dr. Pierrette Herzberger Fofana, by the Belgian police after she took a picture of them engaging in a concerning manner with two young Black men outside a train station.

As in the United States, the 15 million persons who make up populations of Black Europeans and People of African Descent in Europe, have been victims of police brutality and harassment, including unexplained deaths of individuals in police custody. Moreover, the European Union's own Fundamental Rights Agency in 2018 found almost a third of People of African Descent had experienced racial harassment in the five years before with the report claiming that racial discrimination is "commonplace" in the 12 European countries sampled.

We have focused on these issues in the United States Congress through hearings, legislation, multilateral events, and initiatives, including within the European Union. We acknowledge that the European Union has passed legislation such as the Race Equality Directive to prohibit racism and discrimination. We also welcome the European Parliament's resolutions on "Anti-Racism protests following the death of George Floyd" on 19th June 2020 and "The Fundamental Rights of People of African Descent in 2019" in March 2019.

We are also pleased to see that EU Commissioner Dalli will lead on the development of an action plan to address racial discrimination and Afrophobia. However, we are concerned by the possibility of limited implementation by Member States and European Institutions and by the absence of a unit or coordinator in the European Commission addressing anti-Black racism or Afrophobia--especially following the People of African Descent Week in the European Parliament and other events where civil society groups of Afro-Descendants in Europe expressly requested these positions to improve the human rights situation for their communities.

In addition to appointing a coordinator and/or unit focused on anti-Black racism, we call on you to push for the comprehensive implementation of the resolutions and the recommendations in the

letter initiated by MEPs Dr Pierrette Herzberger Fofana, Alice Bah Kunke, and Monica Semedo to:

- Develop an EU framework for national strategies on combatting racism which would require all European Union member states to develop strategic plans and provide funding to improve the situation of diverse communities including People of African Descent in Europe
- Collect and publish equality data disaggregated by racial and/or ethnic origin (as defined by the EU race directive) that is voluntary, anonymous and ensures the protection of personal data, self-identification and consultation with relevant communities
- Push to unblock the anti-discrimination horizontal directive which would increase protections for communities across different sectors of society in Europe
- Convene a European Anti-Racism Summit on combatting structural discrimination in Europe that includes a focus on improving the situation of People of African Descent in Europe

We appreciate your attention and look forward to engaging in further ways of deepening and strengthening our transatlantic partnership.

Sincerely,



Alcee Hastings
MEMBER OF CONGRESS
United States Helsinki Commissioner



Gwen S. Moore
MEMBER OF CONGRESS
United States Helsinki Commissioner



Emanuel Cleaver, II
MEMBER OF CONGRESS
United States Helsinki Commissioner



Marc Veasey
MEMBER OF CONGRESS
United States Helsinki Commissioner



Benjamin L. Cardin
MEMBER OF CONGRESS
United States Helsinki Commissioner



Jeanne Shaheen
MEMBER OF CONGRESS
United States Helsinki Commissioner



Steven Cohen
MEMBER OF CONGRESS
United States Helsinki Commissioner



Karen Bass
MEMBER OF CONGRESS
Congressional Black Caucus Chair



Cory Booker
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Theodore E. Deutch
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Jared Huffman
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



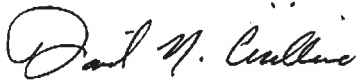
Maxine Waters
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Gregory W. Meeks
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Ilhan Omar
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



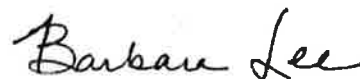
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David Scott
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Bonnie Watson Coleman
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Dwight Evans
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Bobby L. Rush
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Henry C. "Hank" Johnson
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Steven Horsford
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Donald M. Payne, Jr.
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

André Carson
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



David Trone
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

- cc: Stavros Lambrinidis, Ambassador of the European Union to the United States
Věra Jourová, Vice President of the European Commission for Values and Transparency
Josep Borrell, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Didier Reynders, European Commissioner for Justice
Helena Dalli, European Commissioner for Equality