

# Amnesty International UK and anti-racism

## OUR COMMITMENT

Racism is a pervasive problem. It is deep-rooted, entangled in every aspect of the world as it is today: in power structures, cultures, and institutions.

Amnesty International UK is a part of this. We must be frank about this reality if we are to change it. It is something that each and every one of us must take personal responsibility to challenge.

The International Board of Amnesty International have also recognised this, and we commend to you [their statement](#).

At Amnesty International UK, we have been listening and reflecting in order to develop a plan to not just be a more diverse and inclusive organisation, but an effectively anti-racist one.

We have to start by admitting our own failures and opening up to greater accountability.

Fundamentally, we believed that by being part of a global movement whose goal is human rights change, that we would live those values in all that we do. This has not been the case. We recognise that we need to change, and that we must be intentional in what we do if this change is to take place.

We have heard – and will continue to make space to hear – the pain expressed by our BAME colleagues about their experiences of racism at Amnesty International UK. They should not have had to wait for so long to be heard. We believe them, we have failed them, and we are sorry.

We know that we are a movement that does not adequately reach and represent marginalised communities, especially Black communities in the UK. We know that our leadership, staff, and lead activists are overwhelmingly white. But we have never truly questioned this, or acknowledged the power and privilege that has consequently informed us and our work.

All of this diminishes us as a movement, as an organisation. It demeans what we can achieve in the world. And it fails those whom we should be supporting.

We need to be as determined and relentless about the changes we need to make to ourselves, to our own movement, as we are about the change we seek in the wider world.

That is the work we commit to now.

The work to be done is significant. It will take time, resource, and we will in all likelihood make mistakes along the way. We, on behalf of the leadership of Amnesty International UK, commit to this work now, as a core and constant value; and we are sorry that we did not recognise the need to do so sooner. It should not have taken the events of recent months to prompt us to reflect on the pervasive presence of systemic racism and the urgent need to change.

However, ultimately, it is deeds, not words, that are important.

We have set out the immediate next steps for us at Amnesty International UK. We recognise that this is the start of a journey. Anti-racism is an active process – not a single event or a checklist of actions – to identify, challenge, and change the values, structures, and behaviours that perpetuate systemic racism wherever they are found. This statement is therefore not intended to cover all planned work, but rather to set out our commitment – to give confidence and assurance that change is, and will remain, a deeply held passion and commitment to us as Boards.

WE WILL...

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## WE WILL...

- **Lead by example.** The Boards and the Senior Management Team will take personal responsibility for the change that needs to be made and lead by example. It is our expectation that all people managers within Amnesty International UK take part in a specific programme of work whose sole purpose is to develop a practice of inclusive leadership within Amnesty International UK and a far deeper understanding of what it means to be an anti-racist organisation. It is our desire and commitment that this programme not only change Amnesty International UK's collective leadership culture, but also further the personal development of each and every one of us.
- **Build on our internal expertise and accountability.** We have convened a Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group, bringing together our internal expertise across our staff and Boards, to oversee and develop our work on D&I, with a specific focus on anti-racism. We are committed to hearing and learning from the talent and experience held within our organisation.
- **Invest in expertise.** We will recruit two new specialist roles to challenge the organisation, hold us accountable, and build our capacity to become a more anti-racist and inclusive organisation.
- **Embed anti-racism into our work.** As we develop our new strategic plan for our work in the coming years, we commit to ensuring that anti-racism is a part of what we do, and how we do it.
- **Embed anti-racism through our movement.** We will put in place ongoing anti-racism training for our activists, and build a more diverse and inclusive movement including through the creation of a new activist anti-racism network.
- **Be more accountable.** This work will be a regular item on the Boards' agendas. We will establish systems to collect and analyse diversity data of volunteers and staff to enable us to develop focused action plans, monitor progress, and identify recurring issues in the organisation so that we can properly address them.
- **Listen and learn, not lean on.** Our BAME colleagues will be actively consulted and listened to – but only where they wish to speak. Where colleagues do provide us with experience and expertise, we know that such contributions come with a personal cost and wish to ensure that this is recognised appropriately.

- **Learn anti-racism, not unconscious bias.** We will put in place a programme of anti-racism training and continued personal development for all our staff and for lead activists. We will focus our learning and understanding on continually addressing issues of power and privilege within our movement.
- **Review our staff grievance process.** This review will be led by our Head of Safeguarding. It will identify any areas of improvement to our grievance process to ensure that it is safe, supportive, transparent, and inclusive. We will update this action plan to include any actions arising from that review.
- **Improve our volunteering.** We will review the role of volunteering at Amnesty International UK, specifically focusing on ensuring the inclusivity of our volunteer roles how we bring volunteers into the organisation and how we support volunteers while they are working with us.

## By Summer 2021, we will develop a clear plan for how we will continue to develop and deliver on these commitments

As an organisation which demands that governments are held to account, we too should be held to the standards we expect of others.

By publishing this initial statement, reporting regularly against those actions included within it, and adding to it as necessary – we will hold ourselves to those standards.

We thank our staff, volunteers and activists for the incredible work that you do. In particular, we want to acknowledge all the work that our BAME colleagues, past and present, have already put into trying to change behaviours and culture at Amnesty International UK – often at great personal cost. We want to thank you, and we know that we would not be in the place to be able to move forward with this work without all your efforts to get us here.

We know that together we can improve; that together, we will become a truly anti-racist movement and organisation, of which we are all proud to be a part.

■ *Amnesty International UK: Eilidh Douglas, Chair, Amnesty International United Kingdom Section Board and Nicolas Patrick, Chair, Amnesty International UK Section Charitable Trust.*

*February 2021.*