

**United States' Compliance with the International
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination**
Racial Discrimination & Equity in the United States: Evidence from Pittsburgh
SUMMARY DOCUMENT

[Pittsburgh Human Rights Cities Alliance](#) *Shadow Report on the 10th -12th Periodic Reports of the United States for the 107th Session of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Geneva, August 11-12, 2022.*

As part of this review of U.S. compliance with its obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), our alliance of human rights advocates in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania has reviewed the state of racial equity and discrimination in our region and found considerable need for improvements in national policies for the U.S. to realize its commitments under the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination. Although the Biden Administration has taken limited steps to improve racial equity, there is little evidence that its policies have substantially improved conditions in Pittsburgh.

The continued refusal of the United States government to **address the discriminatory outcomes of past and present policies**, along with its rejection of the CERD Committee's call to **regulate private actors who violate human rights** obligations under CERD remain key obstacles to improving conditions for people of color in Pittsburgh and other communities. Moreover, the U.S. government must better support state and local governments in carrying out their obligations under CERD and other international human rights treaties and standards through improved funding and the **leadership of a national human rights institution**.

According to a recent study by the city's Gender Equity Commission and the expertise of [Black women and femme residents](#), Pittsburgh is one of the [worst in the country in terms of the conditions for African American residents](#). Persistent effects of historical discrimination—including redlining and other forms of housing discrimination, discriminatory labor policies and policing practices—continue to negatively impact the health and well-being of Black residents and communities. In just the past decade, more than 10,000 Black residents were displaced from the city. And health researchers documented an alarming 22-year life expectancy differential between the lowest life expectancy, primarily Black neighborhood and the highest, primarily White, neighborhood.

Our report to the CERD Committee documents large racial disparities in maternal health and protections of reproductive rights; failures of governments to address the causes of gun violence and health, which disproportionately impact Black neighborhoods; persistent environmental racism; and continued failure to conform U.S. policing practices with global human rights standards. These patterns reflect persistent failures of federal, state, and local governments to adequately protect the basic human rights of people of color as required in the CERD treaty (Article 1, Par. 1).

To improve conditions for African Americans and other racialized minorities in Pittsburgh, it is increasingly urgent that the federal government improve its material and ideological support for local implementation of human rights in our cities. This requires both increased funding to municipalities for human rights protection and promotion and the establishment of an effective national human rights institution according to the Paris Principles, as recommended in prior reviews of U.S. compliance with CERD and other human rights obligations.

The lived experience of Pittsburgh's Black, Indigenous and other people of color residents shows a *long-standing, consistent, and ongoing pattern of racialized discrimination that the U.S. legal system has failed*

to address. The denial of social, economic, and cultural rights in addition to civil and political protections prevents racialized groups from full participation in political and community life. In a context of growing polarization and rising threats to basic livelihoods, human rights defenders in Pittsburgh are urging the CERD Committee and other world leaders to take more concreted action to assist us by intensifying efforts to improve the compliance of the U.S. government with its human rights obligations under CERD and other international standards and conventions.

Recommended Questions for the Committee

- What is the U.S. government doing to stop ongoing police killings and brutality against African Americans and other people of color and improve local police force compliance with global human rights laws and standards?
- What is the United States government doing to remedy the *long-standing, systematic, and well-documented patterns of racial inequity in U.S. cities* like Pittsburgh, in accordance with its commitments under the CERD?
- What steps and resources have been allocated by the national government to assist local and municipal governments in carrying out their respective obligations under the CERD?

Policy Recommendations

- **Implement fair taxation policies that address structural and historical discrimination.** Government at all levels relies disproportionately on earned income, property, and sales tax, while income from wealth is less subject to taxation. This system discriminates against working and low-income people of all races, and its effects are disproportionately felt by poor people and communities of color.
- **Create a National Human Rights Institution** consistent with the Paris Principles that coordinates local, state, and national implementation of international human rights obligations and improves knowledge of human rights at all levels of government while supporting public education and active engagement in human rights governance.
- **Develop a national human rights-based housing strategy**, through dedicated national leadership, paying particular attention to remedying historical discrimination in the housing sector.
- Take all available measures to mitigate the effects of the *Dobbs* decision to protect comprehensive reproductive health rights for all and to mitigate the disproportionate harms to Black women, women of color and families.
- Develop robust legislation to improve the United States' ability to fulfil its international obligations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, restoring authority gutted by the Supreme Court.
- Strengthen legal and regulatory infrastructure to improve protection of the environment and people's health and take clear steps to *regulate effectively all private actors whose actions impact human rights.*
- Improve federal gun control legislation and empower municipalities to regulate firearm possession in localities.
- Improve federal policies to ensure consistent, human-rights driven policing policies and methods of accountability across U.S. localities.
- Promote human rights education in public schools.
- Prohibit and sanction hate speech in all public arenas—including online spaces. Build community capacities for human rights leadership and education through financial and other support.

Full report to CERD Committee: [Racial Discrimination & Equity in the United States: Evidence from Pittsburgh](#)
Pittsburgh Human Rights City Alliance Website: <http://pghrights.org>