



Christian Conference of Asia

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Racism and inequality anywhere in the world are threats to humanity

The atrocities perpetrated against African Americans and other marginalised communities of colour in the United States of America by police who continue to act with seeming impunity are alarming and of ongoing concern. The two recent murders of two African Americans – George Floyd in Minneapolis and Rayshard Brooks in Atlanta – by the police have spurred subsequent reactions through massive protest movements across the country. The protests and the unrest are clear manifestations of frustration. The killings became the focus around which the American public galvanised to pour out their outcry against social inequality, police brutality, racism, white privilege, rising fascism, callous political and economic elites, and inept governance.

The brutal murders of George Floyd and Rayshard Brooks are unfortunately not isolated incidents, and such acts should be condemned. Viewing the graphic video of the unjustified brute force by the police killing both George Floyd, and Rayshard Brooks, people all over the world now see the inhumane, degrading, and cruel manner in which the police treat African Americans who face widespread and systemic racism on a daily basis in the US.

The whole world awakens to struggle against the colonial legacy of slavery and ongoing racial discrimination. Structural racism is a fact of life everywhere in the world, and angry citizens across the world protest against the legacy of brutal colonialism and racism. They denounce the unconstitutional misuse of the military for tear-gassing and violently dispersing peaceful protesters engaged in the exercise of their constitutional right.

The complaints are that police often unfairly pull over people of colour, especially African Americans, for no other reason than because they “fit the description” by virtue of the colour of their skin. For the same offense, African Americans receive stiffer sentences than other Americans; thus mass incarcerations of African Americans continue as a form of modern slavery.

Economic oppression and political repression have no place in a democracy. Such virulent bigotry is contrary to any sense of human decency. To solve a problem, we must first recognise that a problem exists. The noble words in the US Declaration of Independence and the US Constitution shine a bright light on the rest of the world. However, it is unfortunate that the basic recognition of and respect for the human dignity of African Americans have not been attained yet in the “Land of the Free” and the “Home of the Brave”.

Those who strike against people because of their colour are striking against God who created all human beings in the image of God. We need to recognise the divine presence in each and every one God created, and respect their dignity and integrity regardless of colour, ethnicity, national origin, or social status.

The leadership in the United States must heed the calls of the people to restrain police powers, especially in relation to the use of force. At the same time, the destructive methods of protesters also need to be stopped. The public must keep a level head, while continuing to voice their opposition to the abuse and misuse of power and violence. It is heartening that the United Nation’s Human Rights Council will hold an urgent debate on allegations of “systemic racism, police brutality, and violence against peaceful protests” in the US on Wednesday, 17 June 2020, in response to a request from African countries. This disorienting dilemma is a teaching moment for all those who are concerned about humanity. “Race” is a social construct. Everyone belongs to one race: the human race. Let us all respect each and every one in this world, and celebrate our diverse ethnicities, colours, national origins, languages, and other differences. Let us hope that change is imminent.

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