

## AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL SUBMISSION

# Amnesty International submission to the consultation on the EU Anti-Racism Strategy 2026-2030

July 2025

Reference Number: TIGO IOR 10/2025.7001

### Introduction

With this short overview, Amnesty International is sharing key principles and issues we believe should be addressed in the upcoming EU Anti-Racism Strategy. We appreciate the opportunity to provide input through the meetings that have been organised and the online consultation process. This input by no means reflects all the work Amnesty International has done on relevant issues, nor does it include all forms and manifestations of racism that the strategy should address.

The EU Anti-Racism Strategy, building on the current Anti-Racism Action Plan, could be a decisive moment for advancing racial justice, provided that civil society organisations, particularly those led by racialized communities, are empowered with the platform to shape and implement this strategy. It is imperative to ensure that the most marginalised voices are heard and their concerns addressed.

For cooperation to be effective, it needs to be open, inclusive and equal. We see many challenges in this, for example in the field of combating Islamophobia. It is crucial to work directly with representative organisations trusted by Muslim communities. Representation, cooperation and solidarity are essential. However, across Europe we see clear patterns of Muslim organisations being silenced and targeted, often with the use of defamation and conspiracy theories. The European Institutions need to remain vigilant not to contribute to these trends, willingly or unwillingly.

While developing this strategy, we also urge you to work closely with those developing other relevant strategies, such as those on Gender Equality, on LGBTIQ and on Civil Society, in order to ensure a truly intersectional approach. Further, there should be a review of existing law and policy that enables racism and discrimination, as we have seen in particular in the field of [migration](#) and security, for example in the [Migration Pact](#) and the [Artificial Intelligence Act](#). Current and future proposals, [such as the proposed revision to the 2008 Return Directive](#), risk further codifying systemic racism and should be rejected or significantly amended. Human rights impact assessments should include consultation with racialized communities and findings and recommendations should fully address any concerns raised.

### Racism in the European Union

Systemic racism continues to violate rights and cost lives across the EU. States maintain policies of racialized exclusion towards people from [Africa](#), the Middle East and Asia resulting in deaths and harm being inflicted on people at [sea](#) and [land borders](#). Police [violence](#) continues to disproportionately target racialized people. European governments are failing to address the continued discrimination and segregation of Roma. Despite the infringement case regarding segregation of school children in Slovakia having reached the CJEU, [Romani children still face entrenched discrimination in education](#). The Council of Europe's European Committee of Social Rights [ruled](#) that Italy was in breach of its obligations on all the counts raised, despite the limited and patchy progress the Italian government presented during the proceedings. These are only two examples of the serious human rights violations Roma face across the EU.

The failure of states to implement anti-racism measures and the political exploitation of racism formed the backdrop to a spike in reports of antisemitism and anti-Muslim racism. Those who face institutionalized biases and discrimination, such as anti-Black and anti-Muslim hatred, face additional harm and violations of their rights in public and institutional settings. Muslims and those perceived as such in all areas of life, including [sports](#), where hijab bans undermine efforts to make sports more inclusive and mean that Muslim players and athletes who wear a hijab are discriminated against.

Human rights violations of today can be traced to historical harms of slavery and colonisation which have given rise to contemporary forms of racism. Addressing the racial wealth gap requires a holistic policy intervention that prioritises dismantling systemic barriers that perpetuate racial inequalities in access to education, employment, housing and financial services, as well as breaking off from a siloed approach to policymaking that isolates non-discrimination issues from policies related to social and environmental justice.

To dismantle contemporary forms of racism, the EU and its member states need to address discrimination inherently built into laws and practices inherited from colonial and slavery systems. European colonialism and slavery built the world that we inhabit today. It is palpable all around us – from the borders that divide us to the languages we speak and the knowledge systems we are taught. The incredible wealth that was made by European states through slavery and colonialism has led to gross inequality that continues to mark the world order.

There cannot be meaningful racial justice today without reckoning with this legacy and re-making the oppressive systems built by colonialism. While European states are starting to issue apologies, there's still a resistance to take concrete measures and offer [reparations](#).

### **Re-imagining racial justice**

We stand with a wide range of civil society organizations, including the European Network against Racism, in calling for the [re-imagining of racial justice](#). We call on European leaders to rise to the challenge and confront the tide of authoritarianism and racial justice to create a Europe grounded in human rights and dignity. A better world is possible, one that embraces care, justice, and safety for all, especially those at the margins. It is a world fit to address both past and present social and climate injustices.

In response to fragmented policies and an overfocus on criminalization and securitization, we call for a shift from punitive policies to those that prevent harm and repair the damage already done. Only by embracing an intersectional and restorative approach, guided by the lived experience of those most affected, can we uproot the systems of racism.

The following priorities must be central to this strategy:

- A renewed intersectional anti-discrimination framework that also safeguards the rights of people on the move;
- A legal ban on racial discrimination in law enforcement and migration control;
- A focus on equality and fundamental rights within the Rule of Law Framework, with a sharp focus on racial discrimination, asylum rights, and the rights to protest and free expression;
- A redirection of funding towards social provision and community services, with strict non-discrimination conditions attached to the allocation of funds;
- Strong, inclusive participatory models for designing anti-racism policies, ensuring the voices of marginalized communities lead the way;
- Ensuring that all equality strategies, the anti-poverty strategy and the European Pillar of Social Rights address the needs and protection of racialized groups, including migrants.

### ***Right to protest***

In 2024, Amnesty published a regional report on the right to protest. [Under-protected and over-restricted: The state of the right to protest in 21 countries in Europe](#) reveals a continent-wide pattern of repressive laws, use of unnecessary or excessive force, arbitrary arrests and prosecutions, unwarranted or discriminatory restrictions as well as the increasing use of invasive surveillance technology, resulting in a systematic roll back of the right to protest. This research identified how systemic discrimination, exclusion and marginalization are powerful barriers to people exercising their right of peaceful assembly. Across the region, engaging in public protest was found to trigger harsher repression for people who face other forms of discrimination, particularly when these intersect; for example, for Black people, Arab people or people belonging to other racialized groups, ethnic and religious minorities, and those with a

migrant background. In its research, Amnesty International found public authorities and officials engaging in smear campaigns against specific groups or causes, adds to an increasingly hostile environment in which some groups are disproportionately affected in the enjoyment of their rights. Amnesty International also documented policing that disproportionately focuses on racialized individuals and groups and discriminates against them.

Harmful rhetoric from state officials across the 21 countries was commonplace and often stigmatized peaceful protests and the aims and identities of their participants, demonizing protesters by likening them to “terrorists”, “criminals”, “foreign agents”, “anarchists” and “extremists”, among numerous other stigmatizing terms. The groups on the receiving end of such harmful statements include people who mobilized for Palestinian solidarity, for climate justice, women’s rights, LGBTI activism and rights, the rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, and against racism and discrimination of minorities. Amnesty International documented how harmful rhetoric was used to justify the introduction of further restrictions on rights, including in Germany, Italy, and France. Meanwhile, such attacks on specific groups of participants can exacerbate the fact that people face different barriers to exercise their right of peaceful assembly, and various forms of intersecting discrimination make participation much harder for some individuals.

### ***Solidarity with the Palestinian people***

Amnesty has documented repeated and systematic civic space restrictions against those expressing solidarity with the Palestinian people. Governments across the EU have introduced unwarranted measures to [curtail and punish the expression of solidarity with Palestinians](#) despite mounting global condemnation and opposition to Israel’s genocide against Palestinians in the occupied Gaza Strip. By imposing measures linking calls to end the genocide, and expressions of solidarity with Palestinians specifically with support for or encouragement of terrorism, states have moved beyond the already dubious assertion that protests may be a [threat to public order](#) and into claims that they could threaten national security. Authorities can thus try to claim an easy “out” regarding their obligations under international human rights law because the European Court of Human Rights affords states a wide “margin of appreciation” on national security issues.

The situation in the Middle East, as well as these restrictions and repressions have contributed to further polarisation in society, leading to an increase in hate speech and hate crimes targeting both Jewish and Muslim communities in Europe. Human rights restrictions have disproportionately affected Palestinians, people of Arab descent and Muslim and Jewish people, and those perceived as such, with numerous cases of racial profiling leading to the curtailment of rights.

### ***Protection of human rights defenders***

Together with a wide range of other organizations, Amnesty International has been calling for the development of a [protection mechanism for human rights defenders](#) within the EU. While the EU has a range of instruments at its disposal to support HRDs outside the EU, most notably the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, no such thing exists within the EU. While HRD protection may primarily be an issue for the civil society strategy, it is crucial to also address this in the Anti-Racism Strategy. Those who represent or stand up for racialized communities are often particularly targeted by [individuals](#) as well as authorities at national level, but also at EU level. An example of this can be found in the Facilitators’ Package (comprising Facilitation Directive 2002/90 and Framework Decision 2002/946), the main EU legislative instrument that defines the criminal offence of facilitation of unauthorized entry, transit or residence and sets out the related criminal sanctions. The Facilitation Directive leaves it up to the EU Member States whether to exempt or criminalize civil society organizations and individuals who provide assistance to migrants who entered or transited a country irregularly.