



**To the United Nations Special Rapporteur
on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination,
xenophobia and related intolerance**

**Background Information in preparation for an
Official Country visit to the UK (April - May 2018)
From the Catholic Association for Racial Justice (CARJ)
20 March 2018**

Call for a Strategy to Support Vulnerable Groups in a Changing World

Many of us were shocked by the results of a referendum which put the UK on track to leave the European Union. The months leading up to the referendum saw an increasingly polarised debate in which 'immigration' became a focus of disagreement and discord. Many migrants and refugees, even those long settled here, became nervous. Some with anti-migrant sentiments may have felt that the result of the referendum gave them permission to speak and act against their neighbours. Following the Referendum there was a spike in hate crime.

These developments were especially disconcerting, as the UK had long been seen as a very diverse society at ease with itself. This positive achievement was especially evident in London – which may be the most cosmopolitan city in the world. London's rich diversity, at ease with itself, was evident to the world during the 2012 Olympics

Recent events have seriously disturbed any complacency on our part in the UK, and they may have begun to undermine our positive achievements. We came out of the referendum more conscious of our divisions and more uncertain about our 'common values'.

Moreover, the divisions exposed by the Referendum are set against the background of continuing turmoil in the middle east, the threat of terrorism and many seeking refuge in Europe and the UK. Here at home the gap between the rich and the poor is increasing, many feel left behind, minorities continue to experience discrimination and disadvantage, and there is an increase in hate crime. The recent *Race Disparity Audit* has underlined the complex patterns of inequality that now characterise our society.

In the face of this increasingly complex local and global challenge, we in CARJ felt it was an appropriate time to pause and reflect. Out of this process of reflection and discernment, we identified a number of vulnerable groups we wish to support, including:

- Migrants, refugees and victims of trafficking
- EU citizens in the wake of Brexit
- Young people in marginalised communities struggling to achieve their full potential (1)
- Muslim communities seeking a full and equal place in society, and those individuals or groups who may be targets of radicalisation (2)
- Families in de-industrialised areas who feel 'left behind'
- Black and minority ethnic groups in the criminal justice system (3)
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities with inadequate site provision (4)
- Victims of caste discrimination in the UK (5)
- Victims of hate crime. (6)

CARJ is currently working to understand and support some of these groups. In the future, we will continue our effort to understand the complex forces that undermine such groups; and we will work with others to support the most vulnerable and to create a more just, more equal, more cooperative society for all.

At our recent AGM, the Catholic Association for Racial Justice (CARJ) **called for a strategy** that will promote justice, equality and community **for and among the different vulnerable groups** that are emerging in our changing world.

The call for a wide ranging strategy is prompted in part by the Government's recent publication of the ***Race Disparity Audit. (7)*** Initial findings from the Audit show a changing, complex and many sided pattern of diversity and inequality: The UK has become more ethnically diverse. The majority of people in each group feel at home. However, ethnic minorities tend to be poorer and different groups suffer disadvantage in different areas - eg. education, housing, criminal justice and health. At the same time, in education white working class boys are seriously under-achieving and in some places (eg de-industrialised areas) white communities suffer particular disadvantage and feel 'left behind'. Gypsies, Roma and Travellers are now possibly the most disadvantaged group and remain the targets of explicit racism from the wider community.

The attempt to develop a multi-faceted strategy to support such groups will not be straightforward. There are serious divisions around Brexit and immigration policy, disagreements regarding counter-terrorism strategy and the *Prevent Programme*, widespread prejudices towards Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities, and considerable ignorance of caste discrimination in the UK. There is also a growing tendency to brand any attempt to address these issues as 'political correctness'.

Nonetheless, we in CARJ are committed to working with others to support these vulnerable groups and to create a climate in which they can support one another and be supported by the wider society. Churches and Faith Communities may have an important role in developing and promoting such a strategy.

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- 1) *Time for Change: An Assessment of Government Policies on Social Mobility 1997 – 2017*. Social Mobility Commission (June 2017)
 - 2) *The Casey Review: a review into opportunity and integration*. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (December 2016). Also see *Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper*. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (14 March 2018).
 - 3) *The Lammy Review: an independent review into the treatment of, and outcomes for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Individuals in the Criminal Justice System*. (8 September 2017)
 - 4) The House of Commons' Women and Equalities Committee is currently conducting an Inquiry into: *Tackling Inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities*.
 - 5) *Caste Discrimination and Harassment in Great Britain*. Government Equalities Office. (Research Findings No. 2010 / 8).
 - 6) *Hate Crime Statistics: Statistics on hate crime and racist incidents in England and Wales recorded by the Police*. Home Office (22 October 2014 – last updated 17 October 2017).
 - 7) *Race Disparity Audit: Summary Findings from the Ethnicity Facts and Figures Website*. Cabinet Office (October 2017 - revised March 2018).