



# Communique Committee of Experts

## **Committee of Experts expresses concern over acts of racial discrimination and institutional violence against Afro-descendant and Haitian migrant women in the Dominican Republic**

Washington, DC, May 7, 2025. [The Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women](#) "Belém do Pará Convention" (MESECVI) expresses its concern regarding the allegations and information on acts of racial discrimination and institutional violence committed by national authorities and State security agents against Afro-descendant women during an activity commemorating International Women's Day held in Santo Domingo on March 8, as well as against Haitian migrant women in situations of pregnancy and postpartum.

According to information received by the Committee of Experts (CEVI) from a collective of more than 20 Dominican civil society organizations, police officers violently interrupted a peaceful and authorized event on March 8, during the performance of a *Salve group*, a traditional Dominican rhythm, led by the artist Corina. The intervention was allegedly justified on the grounds that the music was in Haitian Creole, which constitutes an act of racial discrimination and xenophobia, as well as a devaluation of the country's Afro-descendant cultural expressions.

The organizations also report that, in the following days, government authorities and other officially recognized entities issued statements justifying the police action, replicating its discriminatory nature against Afro-descendant women, migrants and Afro-Caribbean cultural expressions present at the commemorative event.

Likewise, the CEVI has learned of reports from the national authorities<sup>1</sup> on the detention of pregnant or postpartum Haitian women in hospitals for the purpose of their deportation. These actions disregard their special situation of vulnerability and the State's obligation to take this situation into account in order to guarantee the protection of their human rights and those of their children, and also constitute a form of obstetric violence.

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<sup>1</sup> See: <https://migracion.gob.do/en/lee-ballester-oversees-the-repatriation-of-haitian-women-in-labor-to-ensure-standards-are-met-and-humane-treatment-is-provided/>

In view of these allegations and information, the Committee of Experts recalls that, according to the Belém do Pará Convention - to which the Dominican Republic is a State Party - the right of every woman to a life free of violence entails the right to be free from all forms of discrimination and to be valued free of stereotypes and social or cultural practices based on concepts of inferiority (Article 6). Under Article 7, States undertake to refrain from any act or practice of violence against women and to ensure that their authorities and agents act in conformity with this obligation. Furthermore, Article 9 establishes the duty to give special attention to situations of vulnerability to violence that women may face due to, among other factors, their race, ethnic origin, or pregnancy.

In this regard, the Committee of Experts emphasizes that violence based on race, gender, and ethnicity constitutes an aggravated and multidimensional form of violence against women, as highlighted in its General Recommendation No. 5 on gender-based violence against Afro-descendant women. In this recommendation, the CEVI warns about the disregard and invisibilization of the cultural richness and diversity of Afro-descendant communities and women, which prevents the recognition of their valuable social, political and cultural impact.

Acts of discrimination and institutional violence committed by State agents, both the police and immigration, represent a serious violation of the fundamental rights of Afro-descendant women and human rights defenders. Therefore, the Committee stresses the obligation of States to adopt urgent measures to prevent and punish these practices, through the development of protocols for action and training processes with a focus on human rights, gender and ethnic-racial perspective. Such protocols should include specific sanctions for those who engage in acts of racial discrimination, profiling, abuse, harassment or sexual violence.

As stated in General Recommendation No. 5: *“In order to effectively modify patterns of discrimination against women and girls of African descent, there is a need to achieve a radical transformation of the narratives and practices that sustain unequal power relations and subordination mechanisms and are based on racism and ethnic-racial discrimination and intolerance.”*

In this context, the Committee of Experts thanks the State authorities for their response to this communiqué, which acknowledges the concerns expressed by the CEVI and reaffirms the commitment of the Dominican State — and in particular of the Ministry of Women — to the principles and obligations established in the Convention.

In light of the foregoing, the Committee of Experts calls on the authorities of the Dominican Republic to act with due diligence in response to the allegations and information referred to and condemn all acts of racism and xenophobia, in order to protect women, especially those in the most vulnerable situations, as well as to punish, repair and guarantee the non-repetition of acts of racial discrimination and institutional violence. It also recommends reviewing police action protocols to ensure their conformity with international standards and incorporating an intersectional approach in public policies on security, police training and access to justice, which integrates the ethnic-racial and gender perspective. It is also essential to preserve and promote Afro-descendant cultural expressions as part of the intangible heritage of peoples, free from censorship or criminalization.

The Follow-up Mechanism of the Belém do Pará Convention, through its Committee of Experts, makes itself available to the authorities of the Dominican Republic for any technical support they may require in this matter.

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*The Committee of Experts is the technical body of the MESECVI, responsible for the analysis and evaluation of the implementation process of the Convention of Belém do Pará. It is made up of independent Experts, appointed by each of the States Parties from among their nationals, who perform their duties in a personal capacity.*