

11/04/18

Heidi Alexander, MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Dear Heidi Alexander,

**YOUR REFERENCE HA/FR/STAN01025/15180376**

I acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 4<sup>th</sup> April 2018.

Thank you for writing to the FCO Minister of State, Lord Ahmad, on my behalf and for sending me his response in relation to the 'Stop the Maangamizi!' Petition & its wider campaign (the SMWeCGEC).<sup>1</sup> Notably, the SMWeCGEC clearly identifies the need for the human and people's rights of all in our Afrikan Heritage Communities to be heard on the matter of reparatory justice and proposes, as the most appropriate forum for doing so, the All-Party Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry for Truth & Reparatory Justice (APPCITARJ).

I quote directly from the SMWeCGEC which states:

*We call upon the UK Government to live up to its declarations of commitment to global respect for universal human rights, good governance and democracy in acknowledging and addressing the social and economic legacies of enslavement on contemporary generations of Afrikans and people of Afrikan heritage. We believe that establishing the All-Party Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry for Truth & Reparatory Justice will go a long way towards institutionalising a reparative truth-seeking process that will contribute to healing and restoring the descendants of the enslaved and facilitating racial justice and equity between the descendants of the enslaved and the enslavers as well as in the wider society. However, such "repair" of the relationship between people of Afrikan heritage and the rest of society cannot take place without public acknowledgement of the crimes against Afrikan people and their descendants over five centuries and counting, and without UK governmental action to enable redress and reparation for the brutal injustices committed in the past which still continues into the present. We call upon the British state to honour the need and right of the descendants of the enslaved to speak in a public forum, provide testimony and evidence of how the legacies of enslavement are resulting in continued human and peoples'*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://stophemaangamizi.com/>

*rights violations, impaired quality of life and the ensuing destruction of the essential foundations of life for Afrikan people today.*<sup>2</sup>

I have to say, Heidi, that contrary to what we had hoped for, this response of Lord Ahmad is, in my opinion, not at all helpful; as it does not address the central aspects of the 'Stop the Maangamizi!' Petition and actually obfuscates pertinent points. For example, it fails to adequately address one of the central goals of the petition as one of the key campaigning tools of the International Social Movement for Afrikan Reparations (ISMAR) in mobilising our people's power to exert upon the British Houses of Parliament towards establishing the APPCITARJ, and other actions necessary to advance the process of dialogue from the ground-upwards, with the British State and society on reparatory justice.<sup>3</sup> Such an evasive response from Lord Ahmad can only be regarded as adding more insults to our injuries, especially given the recent revelation by HM Treasury that tax payers in Britain (including those of Afrikan heritage), were literally forced by state coercion to pay, in clearing the 'debt' the Government of the United Kingdom incurred by awarding unjust compensation to families that profited from the Maangamizi crimes of chattel enslavement.<sup>4</sup> I remind you that a petition has been started about this misuse of taxes.<sup>5</sup>

Quite frankly, Heidi, it is abhorrent that a UK Government Minister with "responsibility for human rights" would have the audacity to keep reiterating the line "we do not believe that reparations are the answer" to the charges of serious violations of Afrikan human, people's and Mother Earth rights that I and many others see as amounting to past and still ongoing present crimes of Genocide and Ecocide as outlined in the 'Stop the Maangamizi!' Petition. From my own point of view, as well as from the viewpoint of many others within the Afrikan Heritage Community for National Self-Determination (AHC-NSD) who share my views, Minister Ahmad has got it terribly wrong.<sup>6</sup> The key point I wish to emphasize here is that Lord Ahmad's approach on behalf of the British government is totally unacceptable. It is unacceptable because it is not for the British Establishment on its own to decide what are the most appropriate measures of redress for Enslavement and its other past and present crimes of Genocide and Ecocide against our people of the continent and Diaspora of Afrika and then go on to say what they are 'doing for us' as Afrikans in and beyond the UK. The human right to a remedy and reparations is, first of all, a right which entails recognising Afrikan people's agency in determining, as affected communities, what we want, how we define the issue of reparations and explain it to the world, and also what, in our self-determined best interests, is to be

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.change.org/p/stop-the-maangamizi-we-charge-genocide-ecocide>

<sup>3</sup> <https://stophemaangamizi.com/2015/10/12/about-the-commission-of-inquiry-appcitarj/>

<sup>4</sup> This forms part of the rationale for the annual Afrikan Emancipation Day Reparations March <http://www.reparationsmarch.org/> which takes place on so-called Emancipation Day, the 1<sup>st</sup> of August. See <https://stophemaangamizi.com/2017/06/> for further information about why the Reparations March occurs.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.change.org/p/refund-our-taxes-paid-to-compensate-enslavers>  
<https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/bristol-news/petition-demands-british-government-refunds-1227302>

<sup>6</sup> <https://globalafrikanpeoplesparliament.org/glossary/>

done to achieve it. I emphasise this ethical principle in a Guardian newspaper thought-piece in 2015 where I state:

*...there is an attempt to impose on us, the descendants of the enslaved, a definition of reparations where it is synonymous with compensation, which is not accepted by the International Social Movement for Afrikan Reparations (ISMAR).<sup>7</sup>*

The holistic, transformative and community self-empowering nature of Afrikan Reparations was highlighted in the 1993 Abuja Reparations Proclamation of the 'First Conference on Reparations for Slavery, Colonisation and Neocolonisation' which took place in Nigeria.<sup>8</sup>

In the above Guardian article, I go on to state:

*Together with Corbyn's activists, we are working to ensure that an autonomous Afrikan Heritage Community for National Self-Determination (AHC-NSD) develops in Britain, which will ensure that Labour's agenda for redistribution of wealth is done locally, nationally and internationally. Wealth criminally expropriated from the enslaved people and their descendants must be redistributed. This is the reparatory justice we demand. The ISMAR's campaign for the establishment of a UK all-party commission for truth and reparatory justice is one important way forward.*

Heidi, unfortunately Lord Ahmad is not the only one getting it wrong. Despite my sincere appreciation to you for making enquiries to Lord Ahmad on my behalf, I have to earnestly state that a more fundamental aspect of the problem here is that there is racially institutionalised Afriphobic denial of the Maangamizi crimes of the past and present across the entirety of the British state and society, including within all echelons from the top to the bottom ranks of Labour as the main opposition party, and prospective government in waiting. Such obscurant denial makes some in the Labour Party to arrogantly dismiss our Afrikan Case for Reparations without even knowing what exactly we ourselves take it to mean! There are also those in the Labour Movement, including some of its 'BAME' members from our Afrikan Heritage communities, who choose not to join or identify with us in studying diligently well in order to say or do anything intelligently wise in favour of our reparations demands, but are quick to start opportunistically jockeying for Establishment careerist positions they think our efforts may open up, whenever the campaigning endeavours of our organisations in and outside the UK belonging to the ISMAR compel a tilt towards hearing more from us and doing something in favour of our Afrikan Case for Reparatory Justice.

So, we hear some positioning manoeuvres and jockeying from such quarters relating to the news in the media recently about the interest of the current Labour Party

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/sep/30/should-britain-government-reparations-slavery>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.ncobraonline.org/the-abuja-proclamation/>

leadership in establishing the very questionable 'Slavery Educational Trust'.<sup>9</sup> It will be usefully educative for the whole Labour Party to learn more about, not only the strong objections to the awfully repugnant name of a 'Slavery Educational Trust', but also to other Maangamizi manifestations of Afriphobia with which many in the Labour Movement are obscurantly distorting what we mean by 'Afrikan Reparatory Justice'. Such obfuscation is clearly manifested in the tokenistic attempts to do something about it for us without properly listening to us in accordance with the principled social-democratic requirements of true Participatory Democracy!<sup>10</sup>

In this regard, evidence-based rationale on the human rights requirement to recognise the agency of affected Afrikan Heritage Communities is afforded by Afrikan American law professor, Carlton Waterhouse when he states:

*Repeatedly, the political contests over guilt and innocence that precede the development of reparations programmes obscure consideration of the critical role that communities and individuals suffering from past abuses should play in establishing those programmes in order to re-establish their personal well-being and societal standing. The resulting focus on wrongdoers replicates the former subordination of the victims of past abuses by rendering them the passive recipients of government actions, over which they have little or no control.*<sup>11</sup>

Elsewhere, Waterhouse states:

*...[e]fforts to redress [past] harms can actually be counter-productive, cruel, or insulting when they are not accompanied by actions that attend to both the needs and agency of the injured group.*<sup>12</sup>

That is why it is important for you to help me and others drum louder to the hearing of the current leadership and entirety of the Labour Party and the wider Labour movement our ISMAR mantra: 'Nothing about us without us!'. Indeed, as one of your local constituents, it is my understanding that part of your role is to convey the wishes and sentiments of local constituents to help properly inform the democratic development and implementation of Labour Party policies. I truly believe that if the Labour Party very well grasps this issue of 'hearing' Afrikan Heritage communities

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/labour-plans-for-slave-link-firms-to-donate-money-to-new-charity-a3797801.html>

<sup>10</sup> See for example University of Essex Transitional Justice Research Briefing paper 5: 'The Importance of a Participatory Reparations Process and its Relationship to the Principles of Reparation' by Maria Suchkova (2011)  
[https://www1.essex.ac.uk/tjn/documents/Paper\\_5\\_Participation\\_Large.pdf](https://www1.essex.ac.uk/tjn/documents/Paper_5_Participation_Large.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Carlton Waterhouse, *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: Moral Agency and the Role of Victims in Reparations Programs*, 31 U. PA. J. INT'L L. 257 (2009). Available at:  
<https://scholarship.law.upenn.edu/jil/vol31/iss1/5>  
<https://scholarship.law.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1118&context=jil>

<sup>12</sup> Carlton Waterhouse, 'Avoiding Another Step In A Series of Unfortunate Legal Events: A Consideration of Black Life Under American Law from 1619 to 1972 and a Challenge to Prevailing Notions of Legally Based Reparations', 26 B.C. THIRD WORLD L.J. 207, 222 (2006).  
<http://lawdigitalcommons.bc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1080&context=twlj>

correctly on matters of reparatory justice; if it sincerely seeks to understand what those of us building the AHC-NSD actually mean by *Pan-Afrikan Reparations for Global Justice*, and gets prepared to work ethically in mutual respect with our own autonomous bona fide ISMAR-linked community organisations, institutions and forces of authentic reparations interest to implement the really necessary solutions, then you will be in a much stronger moral position to hold the existing Conservative led-coalition government and everyone else within the British Establishment to account for their breaches and blatant violations of the human, peoples' and Mother Earth rights of Afrikans and people of Afrikan heritage.

You will be aware that your party leader, the Rt. Hon. Jeremy Corbyn MP, is reported to have said in a Guardian news item on 'Should Britain pay Jamaica reparations for slavery?' on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015:

*We should be doing all we can to right the wrongs of the past - improve trade facilities and arrangements, improve support for Jamaica. That is, in a sense, a form of reparation, though I would be interested to hear what the proposals and what the discussions are.*<sup>13</sup>

In my view, in addition to those of your local constituents who identify as being part of the AHC-NSD, and who also wish to be heard on this matter through me, this approach of hearing what the discussions and proposals are, as advocated by Corbyn, is a correct one. The problem, however, is that up until now, neither the Labour Party itself nor the British Government has been interested in genuinely hearing from us as Afrikan Heritage Communities what we mean by reparations, what we deem necessary in effectively addressing it and what we are doing by ourselves locally, nationally and internationally to effect and secure reparatory justice which requires recognition and support from others.

The issue for me now, Heidi, is a direct ask of you as my MP: how willing are you to hear more from your local constituents who provide a snapshot of the sentiments, views and aspirations of Afrikan Heritage Communities, including the AHC-NSD as a specific community of Afrikan reparations interest, with members within your constituency and other parts of the Borough of Lewisham? How willing are you to hear more on reparatory justice from the AHC-NSD about the efforts we are making to repair ourselves, to self-empoweringly effect our own community self-repairs of all kinds, as was articulated as far back as at the Abuja reparations conference of 1993? I am asking this of you on behalf of myself, fellow members of the AHC-NSD in your constituency, as well as on behalf of my people, whose voices are amplified in my correspondence with you.

I have, in previous discussions with you, identified several ways in which this can occur, for example:

1. Supporting the establishment of *APPCITARJ Glocal Roundtables* in Lewisham which are local hearings consisting of roundtables on the Maangamizi, efforts to address it as well as how best to implement the United

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/30/jamaica-should-move-on-from-painful-legacy-of-slavery-says-cameron>

Nations International Decade for People of African Descent (IDPAD).<sup>14</sup> I previously suggested that in Lewisham we can use the model of the People's Commission of Inquiry on Saving Lewisham Hospital as a template.<sup>15</sup>

2. Recognition of the community regeneration efforts Afrikan Heritage Communities are making to address the impact of the Maangamizi and its legacies such as:

- SERUJAMAA: Afrikan Eco Village Project;
- BRIXTONICS Cooperative & Social Enterprises development projects;
- Bristol in the IDPAD (BIDPAD) proposals.

3. Also, noting the concern that Afrikan Heritage Communities have long had in the welfare of our Mother Continent of Afrika, as relevant to our well-being in the UK and other parts of the Afrikan Diaspora, providing the support we deem appropriate for our communities to more meaningfully engage in extending our community regenerative and developmental efforts in Britain to assist similar efforts on the continent of Afrika. For example, the SANKOFAJAMAAKE Afrikan World Educational & Rematriation Exchanges Project of the Global Afrikan People's Parliament.<sup>16</sup>

Another suggestion is for you to provide support for the International Network of Scholars & Activists for Afrikan Reparations (INOSAAR) initiative.<sup>17</sup> As I previously shared with you, in my letter dated 29<sup>th</sup> February 2018, the INOSAAR is a collaborative project coordinated by academics at the University of Edinburgh (UK) and Wheelock College (Boston, USA). Its purpose is to create an international network dedicated to reparations and other forms of transitional justice for the enslavement and genocide of peoples of Afrikan descent, the invasion of the Afrikan continent by colonial powers (notably France and Britain) in the quest for new areas of political and cultural influence and economic expansion, and the subsequent oppression and deformation of Afrikan identity that arose from this. The network seeks to explore the question of Afrikan Reparatory Justice through the rich variety of research specialisms within both the arts and humanities and the social sciences and is doing so in collaboration and consultation with grassroots activist groups engaged in the struggle for reparations as well as government-linked groups capable of influencing social change.

I recall that at my meeting with you on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2018, you told me that your focus in parliament is on BREXIT related issues. However, matters of reparatory justice are not, in my view, disconnected from it. The fact that BREXIT is making it

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.un.org/en/events/africandescentdecade/>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.savelewishamhospital.com/lewisham-peoples-commission-of-inquiry-2/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://globalafrikanpeoplesparliament.org/about/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.inosaar.llc.ed.ac.uk/>

necessary for the UK Government to seek to strengthen its Commonwealth links in the aftermath of the BREXIT vote raises questions pertinent to Afrikan Reparatory Justice. Among such questions, for example, is the one about what type of relationship is Britain seeking to strengthen with Afrikan and Caribbean countries of the Commonwealth when the existing relationship is not only a product of the crimes of the past, but also fortifies present wrongs of the Maangamizi? So much is this the reality, that in the opinion of the constituencies of the ISMAR to which I belong, this relationship can only be transformed to ensure justice for all, by measures of reparations that will enable Afrikans and people of Afrikan heritage to equitably participate in re-ordering the war-begotten, unequal and unfair system of international relations that continues to be imposed, with manly Euro-American imperial might, upon the globe today. I and many others, whose voices I help to amplify, agree with those elements of the new foreign policy vision of the Labour Party 'A World for the Many, Not the Few' which seeks to redress such global injustice.<sup>18</sup> It is such matters that the INOSAAR proposed meeting in parliament on 'The Academic Legitimacy of the Afrikan Case for Reparations and its Implications for British State Policy-Making' will help to clarify.<sup>19</sup> Heidi, it would be greatly appreciated if you also try to do whatever you can to lend your support as my MP to making such a meeting happen, of course, with the support of INOSAAR.

Heidi, local elections are coming up and I for one would wish to encourage you to recognise that the Black vote in Lewisham will be cast by a significant number of members of our Afrikan Heritage communities, including those of us belonging to the AHC-NSD, who shall only vote for candidates we regard as interested in seriously hearing our case for Afrikan Reparatory Justice as it is being expounded by our ISMAR in and beyond the UK!

Sincerely



Esther Stanford-Xosei

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.redpepper.org.uk/labour-sets-out-to-overhaul-neo-colonial-development-policy/>.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/INOSAAR/posts/2101374110100261>