Reparatory justice for Africans and people of African descent

Based on the United Nations High Commissioner's 2025 report (A/HRC/60/70) pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 47/21– See also OHCHR explainers on reparatory justice.

Around 30 million people were violently uprooted from Africa for enslavement. Yet no country with a legacy of enslavement, the trade in enslaved Africans and colonialism has fully confronted this past, accounted for the harms suffered and repaired its continuing negative impacts on Africans and people of African descent. Around the world, calls for reparatory justice have been growing. Some States, universities, religious groups and businesses that profited —or continue to profit— from legacies of enslavement and colonialism have started to act.

Reparatory justice means ensuring accountability and redress for harms suffered. It is key to dismantling systemic racism and transforming the present and future for Africans and people of African descent.

The High Commissioner for Human Rights has highlighted the role of States and others in confronting legacies of the past, including dismantling structures and systems that perpetuate systemic racism at all levels. He has called for a multi-pronged approach that is context-specific, intersectional, grounded in international human rights law. A variety of measures are needed to repair the harms caused because of their magnitude and seriousness.

Key elements of a comprehensive approach to reparatory justice

- Measures to advance reparatory justice must be designed through meaningful consultation with and the participation of people of African descent
- Measures adopted should respond to the demands of affected communities
- A gender-transformative and intersectional approach must be central to the design and implementation of reparatory processes.

Key components of reparatory justice include:

- Formal acknowledgments and public apologies
- Truth-seeking and archives
- Memorialization and educational measures
- Restitution of heritage
- Compensation
- Medical and psychosocial support

Who is responsible for delivering reparatory justice?

- States – first and foremost
- Others who gained wealth from enslavement or colonialism and who still benefit to this day, including: academic institutions and museums; religious groups; and business enterprises

For further information, see Agenda towards transformative change for racial justice and equality | OHCHR