

**Statement by Amnesty International at the 10th Anniversary
Commemoration of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action,
General Assembly High-Level Meeting, 22 September 2011**

**Delivered by José Luis Díaz, Amnesty International Representative at the
UN**

Thank you for the opportunity to take part in today's commemoration. Amnesty International participated in the 2001 Durban World Conference, and it examines questions of racial discrimination and related intolerance, both in their discrete manifestations and in the way they intersect with other human rights violations.

In following these questions, we find it striking that while virtually everyone agrees that racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance affect all parts of the world, rare are the governments that admit that these phenomena are a real problem in their countries. Alas, too many seem to be more inclined to find manifestations of racism and xenophobia in other states, or to claim that the treatment they themselves reserve for specific persons or groups is not really discrimination, racism or xenophobia. We believe that if there has not been more progress in the struggle against racism, this is in good part due to the tendency of States to play politics with the issue -- using it to score points against other States -- coupled with the readiness of many governments to bury their heads in the sand about the extent of the problem at home.

This too-prevalent state of denial in many states, at least as it concerns their own situations, makes the focus of today's commemoration the victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance even more pertinent. It is, in relative terms, easy to discuss the problem and what is needed in the abstract: the large number of declarations and documents on racism and discrimination are evidence of that. It is more challenging for many states to come to grips with the victims of acts often committed by their own officials or others within their national society, and give those victims the recognition that allows them to get justice. This requires acknowledging that the problem exists in one's own backyard and that it must be confronted squarely.

It requires, then, more action-oriented plans outlining practical measures to curb racism and related forms of discrimination and deliver justice to victims, be they persons stigmatized because of their caste, because they are Afro-descendants, because they are migrants -- in the global north and in the global south -- because they are HIV positive, because they are Roma, because they are indigenous or for multiple reasons at once. Whether more real action is taken will largely determine if at the next commemoration of the World Conference the international community will celebrate true progress towards the elimination of racism or merely lament again that despite the progress achieved, much more still remains to be done.

The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) and the Outcome Document of the 2009 Review Conference are not perfect. They are the result of arduous negotiations and reflect compromise. But as the products of broad global convergence, they provide a basis for the concrete measures to combat racism and discrimination that are so sorely needed. There is an onus on all, including those countries that have decided not to engage in this process or to withdraw, to demonstrate their commitment to the victims of racism and discrimination as enshrined in the DDPA.