

**International Service for Human Rights and La Vérité pour Adama -  
Report to the Human Rights Committee - 142nd session**

This submission aims to draw the attention of the Human Rights Committee to the case of a young French man of African descent, **Adama Traoré**, who was the **victim of police violence resulting in his death on July 19, 2016**. Mr. Traoré's case was dismissed, despite the establishment of a causal link between his death and the intervention of the forces of law and order. These fatal acts of violence are part of a very specific context, that of the excessive use of force against people from Afro-descendant minorities, that of the impunity of the forces of law and order, in short, a context in which racist practices are systemic and all too often brushed aside out of hand.

As a reminder, the Committee had already raised a number of points relating to this issue in its previous concluding observations, which is why, in anticipation of the submission of France's sixth periodic report, the government was asked what measures had been put in place to combat "**systemic practices of racial discrimination by the police [...]**".<sup>1</sup> In addition, the State Party was requested to provide information on the number of injuries and **deaths linked to the excessive use of force, as well as information on the practice of restraint techniques such as prone tackling during police operations**. It also requested data on the profile of victims, including their ethnic origin, as well as details of **the outcome of investigations into such violence or deaths, including those of a racist nature**. Most importantly, the Committee's experts requested more **information on the penalties imposed on those responsible**, as well as the **reparations offered to victims and their families**.

The story of Adama Traoré is a perfect illustration of the **failures of** the French state to meet its obligations in terms of **non-discrimination and the right to life**. The events took place on July 19, 2016. While Adama was in the street with his brother Bagui, he witnessed the latter's arrest by the gendarmerie. Not wanting to find himself involved in police custody for facts that had nothing to do with him, Adama turned back. Seeing him running, the gendarmes **chased him**. A plainclothes officer without an armband (to identify themselves as law enforcement) finally caught up with the young man and handcuffed him. A passer-by thought Adama had been the victim of an assault, because without a uniform it was impossible to guess the function of the gendarme in question. It was in this context that the passer-by intervened, thinking he was helping Adama, who panicked and fled into an apartment. Three gendarmerie officers eventually tracked down Mr. Traoré and **threw all their weight behind him to immobilize him and make a belly tackle**.

Adama was then taken by vehicle to the gendarmerie. However, according to the gendarmes, he had "**difficulty breathing**". He **urinated on** himself in the car and had a moment's absence. Nevertheless, **despite the fact that the hospital was only a few minutes away** from the gendarmerie, the gendarmes decided to head in the direction of the latter. Adama was removed from the car and laid on the ground in the gendarmerie yard, still handcuffed. The fire department was called, as Adama was **inert** and his eyes bulging. According to the

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<sup>1</sup> Human Rights Committee (2021), [List of issues prior to the submission of the sixth periodic report of France](#), p1,B, par.3)

fire chief, he was lying **face down on the ground and was accused of feigning discomfort by the gendarmes**. It was finally in this gendarmerie yard, on the ground, that Adama Traoré **was pronounced dead** on his 24th birthday. <sup>2</sup>

After more than **seven years of proceedings**, including an appeal to the Chambre de l'instruction, the courts **dismissed the case in May 2024, exonerating the three gendarmes from any criminal liability**. **In the absence of any reconstruction of the facts** that might have helped to establish the truth, **it was ruled that, while the causal link between the manoeuvres carried out by the gendarmerie and Mr Traore's death had been established, the use of force was proportionate, legitimate and necessary**. This decision reinforces the sense of impunity and injustice felt by victims of police and racist violence in France.

If the Adama Traoré case has become emblematic of the issue of police violence against people from minority backgrounds in France, it's because it has truly highlighted systemic pitfalls within the French system, which still struggles to guarantee equality and justice for minorities. As a reminder, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination noted "with concern the case concerning the death of Adama Traoré" and recommended that France "conclude the investigation into the case concerning the death of Adama Traoré, so that those responsible are brought to justice and appropriately punished".<sup>3</sup> In addition, CERD also recommended that France ensures "that members of groups subjected to racism and racial discrimination who are victims of excessive use of force by law enforcement officers have access to effective remedies and compensation and do not suffer reprisals for having reported the incidents"<sup>4</sup>.

**In this context, we urge the Human Rights Committee to:**

- Raise the case of Adama Traoré during the interactive dialogue with the State party and ask the State party to provide information to the Committee on the steps it has taken to conclude the investigation into the case of Adama Traoré's death, so that those responsible are brought to justice and appropriately punished;
- Recommend that the State party comply with its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights with regard to combating racial discrimination and the right to life;
  - Take effective preventive measures to address racist remarks and practices by law enforcement;
  - End impunity for police violence and ensure independent and impartial investigations into the death or injury of anyone at the hands of the police;
  - Put an end to the use of restraint techniques such as belly tackles during police operations;
  - Guarantee access to justice for victims and families of victims of police violence;

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<sup>2</sup> For more details: [The Truth for Adama submission to CERD](#) (2022); and [Joint submission to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) (2020).

<sup>3</sup> CERD [Concluding observations on the twenty-second and twenty-third periodic reports of France](#) (2022).

<sup>4</sup> In November 2022, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination raised allegations with France of online smearing messages and threats, including from the Twitter accounts of two police professional unions, against Assa Traoré – Adama Traoré's sister and the founder of the Comité Adama organization – following her cooperation with the Committee. For more details : [ISHR](#).