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To Be Human in a Dehumanizing World: Black Lives Matter and the Human Rights Framework

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Research Panel: Popular Movements: A Closer Examination

Presenter: Maria Rohani, CARE USA

Title: To Be Human in a Dehumanizing World: Black Lives Matter and the Human Rights Framework

Abstract:

This paper explores the relationship between Black Lives Matter and the human rights regime.

First, the study contextualizes the contemporary movement within the long and complicated historical relationship between racial justice struggles and the international human rights system. Second, the paper looks at the available human rights tools that could advance the goals of Black Lives Matter, with a focus on relevant international treaties, the Inter-American System, and the Universal Periodic Review. Third, the project studies the ways in which Black Lives Matter has, on its own, already engaged with human rights discourse.

Here, a sample of Twitter content will be examined as well as a selection of literature drafted by Black Lives Matter's leaders.

Lastly, the paper discusses the ways in which the human rights system, as it currently functions, may not support the vision and values of Black Lives Matter. This final section will rely on two key discussions. One looks at the international system through the lens of critical race theory. The other examines the role of the nation-state in the human rights regime.

Ultimately, this paper works to unpack the connection between Black Lives Matter and human rights and to interrogate the underlying complexities of this relationship.

About the presenter:

Maria Rohani is the social movements advisor at CARE USA, where she oversees the organization's strategy for engaging with social movements and grassroots activists. She completed a master's in human rights studies at Columbia University in January 2017. At Columbia, her research focused on racial politics, social movements, and cross-racial coalition building. She has a bachelor's degree in political science and peace and conflict studies from the University of California, Berkeley. She is based in Brooklyn, New York.