

# Afro-descendants of Latin America: Selected Resources

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The United Nations (U.N.) [estimates](#) that approximately “200 million people identifying themselves as being of African descent live in the Americas.” Congress has long demonstrated interest in the status of Afro-descendants abroad as seen in legislation and hearings. Since 1993, the Department of State submits an annual [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices](#) that includes a section on “National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities.” This CRS Insight focuses on resources that relate to the human rights of Afro-descendants of Latin America, including connections to socioeconomics, international organizations, and international declarations and conventions.

This CRS Insight uses the umbrella term “Afro-descendant” rather than country-specific terms such as “Afro-Cuban” or “Afro-Colombian,” or foreign language terms such as “moreno,” or “pardo.” The World Bank’s 2018 report [Afro-descendants in Latin America: Toward a Framework of Inclusion](#) details that the term “Afro-descendant” was “first adopted by regional Afro-descendant organizations in the early 2000s, and describes people united by a common ancestry but living in very dissimilar conditions.”

For Afro-descendants of Latin America, human rights challenges are intertwined with socioeconomics. The 2002 U.N. [Durban Declaration](#) emphasized “poverty, underdevelopment, marginalization, social exclusion and economic disparities are closely associated with racism, racial discrimination ... and contribute to the persistence of racist attitudes and practices which in turn generate more poverty.” For example, the [World Bank’s LAC \(Latin America and the Caribbean\) Equity Lab](#) published 2019 data illustrating that in the case studies of Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Uruguay, a higher percentage of Afro-descendants are poor (living on less than \$5.50 per day in 2011 purchasing power parity terms) as compared to the national average. In reverse chronological order, **Table 1** lists resources related to the socioeconomic status of Afro-descendants in Latin America.

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**Table 1. Resources on Socioeconomics of Afro-descendants in Latin America**

Title	Author	Resource Type
<a href="#">Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights of Persons of African Descent: Inter-American Standards to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate Structural Racial Discrimination (2021)</a>	Inter-American Commission on Human Rights	Report covering the challenges of statistical visibility, Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) context, and violence, as well as Inter-American standards to combat racial discrimination
<a href="#">LAC Equity Lab: Ethnicity</a> (last updated 2021)	World Bank	Website with data on socio-demographics, poverty and access to services
<a href="#">Children of African descent in Latin America (2019)</a>	U.N. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	Briefing note on population, childhood inequalities, health and education indicators
<a href="#">Afro-descendants in Latin America: Toward a Framework of Inclusion (2018)</a>	World Bank	Report covering terms, population distribution, poverty, and education
<a href="#">Mujeres afrodescendientes en América Latina y el Caribe: Deudas de igualdad (2018)</a>	U.N. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	Report on Afro-descendant women's economic, physical and decision making autonomy (Available in Spanish and Portuguese only)

**Source:** Compiled by CRS.

Several international organizations have expressed concern about the human rights of Afro-descendants. In 1966, the U.N. proclaimed March 21<sup>st</sup> as the [International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#). In August 2021, a unanimously adopted resolution established the [United Nations Permanent Forum of People of African Descent](#), a 10-member advisory body that works with the U.N. Human Rights Council. The U.N. and the Organization of American States (O.A.S.) also have rapporteurs, established in 1993 and 2005, respectively, which work to combat racial discrimination through various means. The O.A.S.' Inter-American Commission on Human Rights holds hearings, some categorized under the [Rights of Afro-Descendants/Against Racial Discrimination](#). In some instances, the Commission may recommend cases to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. **Table 2** lists resources from international organizations regarding the rights of Afro-descendants of Latin America.

**Table 2. Resources on International Organizations and Afro-descendants in Latin America**

Title	Author	Resource Type
<a href="#">International Decade for People of African Descent 2015-2024</a>	United Nations	Website with resources, events, regional meeting information and more
<a href="#">Rapporteurship on the Rights of Persons of African Descent and against Racial Discrimination</a>	Organization of American States	Website with reports, hearings, and press releases
<a href="#">Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism</a>	United Nations	Website with thematic reports and country reports
<a href="#">Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent</a>	United Nations	Website with thematic reports and country reports

**Source:** Compiled by CRS.

Various international organizations have also issued a number of declarations and conventions concerning the human rights of Afro-descendants. For example, since 2017, several U.N. groups are working on a

draft “Declaration on the Promotion and Full Respect of Human Rights of People of African Descent.” **Table 3** lists, in reverse chronological order, select international declarations that relate to the human rights of Afro-descendants in Latin America.

**Table 3. International Declarations and Conventions regarding Human Rights of Afro-descendants of Latin America**

Title	Author	Date adopted
		Date of entry into force
<a href="#">Inter-American Convention Against All Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance</a>	Organization of American States	June 5, 2013 February 20, 2020
<a href="#">Inter-American Convention Against Racism, Racial Discrimination and Related Forms of Intolerance</a>	Organization of American States	June 5, 2013 November 11, 2017
<a href="#">World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance: Declaration and Programme of Action (also known as the Durban Conference)</a>	United Nations	2002
<a href="#">Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice</a>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)	November 27, 1978
<a href="#">International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination</a>	United Nations	December 21, 1965 January 4, 1969

**Source:** Compiled by CRS.

Additionally, CRS Reports discussing Afro-descendant populations include the following products:

- CRS Report R43813, *Colombia: Background and U.S. Relations*, by June S. Beittel
- CRS Report R46236, *Brazil: Background and U.S. Relations*, by Peter J. Meyer
- CRS In Focus IF11381, *Guyana: An Overview*, by Mark P. Sullivan

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