

# Trump's 'racist hate speech' fuelling rights abuses: UN watchdog

AFP | Geneva, Switzerland

**A** UN watchdog warned yesterday that racist hate speech by US President Donald Trump and other political leaders coupled with intensified immigration crackdowns were fuelling grave rights violations.

The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination highlighted the growing "racist hate speech" targeting migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the United States.

It also pointed to the use of "derogatory and dehumanising language" and harmful stereotypes targeting the same people.

These groups have been portrayed "as criminals or as a burden, by politicians and influential public figures at the highest level of the state party, particularly its president", the group said in an urgent report.

This "fosters intolerance and may incite racial discrimination (and) hate crimes", it warned.

The CERD also voiced grave concern over the "systematic use of racial profiling" by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and other officers deployed in Trump's immigration crackdown.

The targeting of "persons of Hispanic/Latino, African or Asian origin and arbitrary iden-



A "Titanic"-themed satirical statue of U.S. President Donald Trump and late convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein is shown on the National Mall on March 10, 2026 in Washington, DC.

... have reportedly resulted in the widespread arrest of refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and persons perceived as such", it said.

At least 675,000 people had been deported since January 2025, when Trump returned to power, it noted.

The CERD is composed of 18

independent experts tasked with monitoring how countries implement an international convention on eliminating racism.

## 'Excessive force'

Denounced the "excessive use of force during immigration enforcement operations", the committee noted that at least eight

people had died since January during ICE operations or while in ICE custody.

The CERD report followed an urgent

submission from the American Civil Liberties Union in February asking it to investigate rights violations during the Trump administration's dramatic immigration crackdown in Minnesota and elsewhere.

That request was filed under the CERD's early warning and urgent action procedure, which allows it to address urgent matters arising between its regular sessions.

Thousands of federal agents including ICE agents earlier this year carried out weeks of sweeping raids and arrests in Minnesota in what the Trump administration claimed were targeted missions against criminals.

The controversial operation ended last month after growing outrage over the killings of two US citizens, Renee Good and Alex Pretti,

and the arrest of a five-year-old.

## 'Inhuman conditions'

Wednesday report from the CERD called on Washington to "ensure accountability, including by conducting effective, thorough and impartial investigations" into all alleged abuses.

It also condemned the "drastic increase" in the number of detainees held at immigration detention facilities. The numbers reportedly rose from 40,000 in late 2024 to around 73,000 at the start of this year.

It voiced concern too over reports of "inhuman conditions and inadequate medical care" in such facilities, noting that at least 29 migrants had died in detention in 2025, and six in January this year.

The committee also expressed alarm at Washington's decision to rescind longstanding guidelines and policies limiting immigration enforcement operations and arrests near schools, hospitals and faith-based institutions.

In its recommendations, CERD urged the United States to suspend all such operations and to conduct a rights-based review of its legislative measures adopted since January 2025.

It also called on Washington to publicly condemn racial discrimination and racist hate speech.



## Man set himself alight in fatal Swiss bus fire: prosecutor

AFP | Fribourg, Switzerland

**A**n inferno on a Swiss bus that killed six people was seemingly started by a "disturbed" man on board who set himself alight, the investigating prosecutor said yesterday.

The blaze happened on Tuesday evening in the small town of Kerzers, around 20 kilometres (12 miles) west of the capital Bern.

Videos shared on social media showed flames several metres high bursting out of the windows, and black smoke rising into the sky.

"A witness statement indicated that a man... of Swiss origin boarded the bus carrying bags. At some point, he doused himself with a flammable substance and set himself alight," Fribourg canton's public prosecutor Raphael Bourquin told a press conference.



He said the family of the man, who was from Bern canton and in his sixties, had recently "reported his disappearance", and

"current evidence describes him as a marginalised and disturbed individual".

"There is absolutely no evidence to suggest that this could be a terrorist act," he said, adding that "it appears that this person is among the deceased".

Fribourg police chief Philippe Allain said detectives were trying to work out who got on and off the bus along its route from the nearby town of Dudingén, to pinpoint how many people were on board at the time.

The potential victims were born between 1961 and 2009, he said.

Two still in hospital Besides those killed, the fire injured five people. Three people were taken to hospital; two are in a serious condition and the other has since returned home.

Two other people were treated at the scene by emergency responders.

Several ambulances and a helicopter were sent to the scene, with investigators working late into the night, and three injured people were taken to hospital.

Before dawn on Wednesday, the charred shell of the bus had been removed from the road, leaving a few traces of melted tar on the ground and a faint smell of burning in the air.

A hotline has been opened for witnesses to come forward, as authorities try to determine the exact circumstances of the fire.

Fribourg police said a criminal investigation had been opened by public prosecutors.

## 'Terrible tragedy'

It is the second major multiple-casualty fire in Switzerland in less than three months.

In the early hours of January 1, a bar in the ski resort of Crans-Montana caught fire as people celebrated the New Year.

A total of 41 people died, with another 115 injured.

"I am shocked and saddened that people in Switzerland have once again lost their lives in a serious fire," Swiss President Guy Parmelin said on X.

"I would like to express my condolences to the families of those who died in Kerzers. My thoughts are also with the injured and the emergency services."

The bus involved was a Post-Bus, a feature of Swiss rural life.

The distinctive yellow buses serve more remote areas, connecting them with towns, while also carrying letters and parcels.

They are used by around half a million people every day, notably schoolchildren.

PostBus chief executive Stefan Regli called it a "terrible tragedy" and said their employees were "shocked".

## Arctic sea ice among lowest on record: AFP review of US data

AFP | Paris, France

**A**rctic sea ice is headed for one of its smallest winter peaks on record, an AFP review of US data showed yesterday, as climate change shrinks the region's frozen cover and heightens geopolitical tensions.

Formed when ocean water freezes, Arctic sea ice melts naturally in summer and reforms in winter, but the amount that returns has been declining due to human-induced planetary

warming.

The maximum sea ice extent in the Arctic reached nearly 14.22 million square kilometres (5.5 million square miles) on March 10, according to the data from the US National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC).

If the trend continues before winter ends later this month, it would rank among the five smallest ice covers in four decades of satellite monitoring, possibly even breaking last year's

record.

While ice has gone down in the last few days, it can still go back up, said Seamus McAfee, an NSIDC spokesman.

"But so far, it is looking like it could be a very significant extent, perhaps one of, if not the lowest, in the record," McAfee told AFP.

Last year, Arctic sea ice reached an all-time low on March 22, at 14.31 million square kilometres, according to the

NSIDC. Previous lows were set in 2016, 2017 and 2018.

The NSIDC has yet to have an exact date for the 2026 maximum sea ice extent, McAfee said, adding that it would issue a press release once that becomes clearer.

Samantha Burgess, strategic lead for climate at the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts, told AFP that this year would be among the lowest five on record.



Gilles Garric, polar oceanographer at French climate research institute Mercator Ocean Toulouse, said this winter was among the "top three" so far.

"The sirens are blaring that we're headed for a hothouse planet with massive devastation around the world," said Shaye Wolf, climate science director at the Center for Biological Diversity, a US-based environmental group.