



Government of Bermuda
Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

by

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Minister of Youth, Social Development and Seniors

Human Rights Commission – 2024 Annual Report

Friday, 18th July 2025

Mr. Speaker,

I am pleased today to lay before this Honourable House, the Annual Report of the Human Rights Commission for the year ending 31st December 2024.

Mr. Speaker,

The Human Rights Commission has a statutory remit to protect and promote human rights under the Human Rights Act 1981. The Commission's mandate involves education, the promotion of principles of non-discrimination and equality, and to investigate and endeavour to settle allegations of discrimination.

Mr. Speaker,

The Executive Officer of the Commission screens and investigates alleged contraventions of the Act, provides assistance to those who believe they have experienced discrimination, or assists those who have questions related to rights and obligations under the Human Rights Act.

The Commission is both a public watchdog for human rights compliance and a resource to foster and promote human rights principles by working with

stakeholders across the island inclusive of the Government, employers, service providers, landlords, community organisations, schools and individuals.

Mr. Speaker,

The Commission works to further its objective of eradicating discrimination through the following means:

- Addressing all queries related to rights in Bermuda.
- Screening and investigating complaints of discrimination under the Human Rights Act, 1981.
- Providing dispute resolution services through mediation to help settle complaints of discrimination.
- Referring meritorious complaints to the Human Rights Tribunal.
- Reviewing policies and providing guidance with all stakeholders in support of human rights obligations.
- Engaging in collaborative presentations, research and educational programming.
- Facilitating and participating in consultations to support the evolution of human rights in Bermuda.
- Providing educational presentations, workshops and training tailored to meet stakeholder needs in support of their human rights education and compliance commitments.
- Providing recommendations to the Government on proposed legislative amendments to ensure consistency with international standards.
- Supporting the independence of the Selection and Appointment Committee and the Human Rights Tribunal.
- Providing guidance to the Government, organisations, businesses, and educational institutions on the development and implementation of a human rights-based approach to legislation, policies, programs and complaint handling mechanisms to ensure compliance with the Act and international human rights agreements.

Mr. Speaker,

Included in the Annual Report, you will note that during the 2024 calendar year, the Commission received one hundred and seventy-nine (179) intakes, which account

for both complaints and queries. The Commission observed significant increases in intakes that appeared to contravene the Act, with a higher volume of matters advancing through the complaint handling stages in contrast to previous years. Of the total intakes received in 2024, sixteen per cent (16%) remain ongoing, as the remaining eighty-four per cent (84%) have been resolved.

Mr. Speaker,

The intakes primarily identified discriminatory treatment based on the protected ground relating to:

- (i) *disability* at seventeen per cent (17%);
- (ii) *sex* at fifteen per cent (15%); and,
- (iii) *ethnic or national origins*, which accounted for fourteen per cent (14%).

Mr. Speaker,

Within the protected areas of discrimination, twenty-seven per cent (27%) of the intakes received, related to concerned alleged contraventions of section 6(1) of the Act. The protected area of workplace harassment, contrary to section 6B(1) of the Act, accounted for seventeen per cent (17%) of intakes, followed by allegations of discrimination within the provision of goods, facilities and services, accounting for fifteen per cent (15%) of intakes received.

Mr. Speaker,

The Annual Report further states that sixty-eight per cent (68%) of the intakes received concerned employment and/or the workplace. This total combined matters under the protected areas in the Act, such as section 6, section 6B, section 9 and matters that came to the Commission, which were identified as being employment related. The complaints field included various individuals reporting that they were sexually harassed within the workplace, were denied employment because of a criminal record, were terminated because of their family status and experienced discriminatory treatment with respect to pay because of their place of origin and/or ethnic or national origins.

Mr. Speaker,

- On March 21, 2024, the Commission hosted the “What Can I Do? What Can We Do?” conference, a day dedicated to learning, connection and collective action to protect and promote human rights in Bermuda.

- In June 2024, the Commission launched a public consultation to gain deeper insight into the lived experiences of people with disabilities. The consultation was designed to hear from people with disabilities, their families, disability advocates, and support services and members of the public. It was aimed to create a platform for sharing experiences and highlighting the barriers faced while navigating life in Bermuda; and,
- In October 2024, the Commission acknowledged the extension of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to Bermuda.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker,

The Annual Report highlighted that Palestine continued to feature among the work of the Commission as the ongoing genocide against Palestinians continued in 2024. The Commission joined the Peace March and the gathering on Cabinet Grounds, coinciding with the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, emphasizing the need for vigilance in protecting rights.

Mr. Speaker,

I commend the Officers of the Commission under the leadership of the Executive Officer for their steadfastness and commitment to the work of the Human Rights Commission. I invite this Honourable House to read the annual report of the Human Rights Commission and become informed about the engagements, educational activities and accomplishments that the Commission was involved in during 2024.

Also, **Mr. Speaker,** I want to inform the listening public that the Selection and Appointment Committee of the Human Rights Commission is receiving applications to serve as a Human Rights Tribunal Panel Member. More information about this can be found at www.humanrights.bm.

Mr. Speaker,

In closing, and in accordance with Section 30A of the Human Rights Act 1981, I now lay before this Honourable House the Human Rights Commission Annual Report for the year ending 31st December 2024.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker