
CARICOM Presses Britain's Cameron over Slavery Reparations

30/09/2015



Publication of the letter from historian Hilary Beckles coincided with Cameron's arrival in Jamaica for a brief official visit.

Beckles, the vice chancellor of the University of the West Indies, wrote that the legacies of slavery “continue to derail, undermine and haunt our best efforts at sustainable economic development.”

The Caribbean continues to deal with the “psychological and cultural rehabilitation” from “the crimes against humanity committed by your British State and its citizens in the form of chattel slavery and native genocide,” the commission chair said.

“In this regard I urge you to be aware that the issue of reparatory justice for these crimes is now before our respective nations, and the wider world. It is not an issue that can be further ignored, remain under the rug, or placed on back burners,” Beckles said.

The chairman said that while Britain has become “great” as a result of slavery, “Jamaica has remained the poorer.”

Cameron, in a statement released Tuesday by the British High Commission in Kingston, said the guiding principle for the first bilateral visit to Jamaica is that “we would both benefit from a stronger and deeper relationship.”

“I believe that Britain can help the Caribbean countries on their path of development – lifting

people out of poverty, increasing economic growth, trade and security, and creating opportunities for young generations. That's in your interest, but it's firmly in our interest too," the British prime minister said.

CARICOM has already agreed upon a 10-point program on reparations that includes asking Europe for an official apology and debt forgiveness.

CARICOM comprises Antigua and Barbuda; the Bahamas; Barbados; Belize; Dominica; Grenada; Guyana; Haiti; Jamaica; Montserrat; St. Lucia; St. Kitts and Nevis; St. Vincent and the Grenadines; Suriname; and Trinidad and Tobago.
