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# Summary Analysis of: "AFRO-DANSKERES OPLEVELSE AF DISKRIMINATION I DANMARK"

By Afro Empowerment Center Denmark (AEC)



# Introduction

In response to the report **Afro-danskeres oplevelse af diskrimination i Danmark (2017)**, made by the **Danish Institute of Human Rights (DIHR)**, the **Afro Empowerment Center Denmark (AEC)** has decided to conduct a necessary summary analysis of the report's process, focus and content with the purpose of highlighting the individual parts of the report as well as its shortcomings.

AEC is a member-based non-governmental organization comprised of People of African Descent (PAD) from many nations incl. the continent of Africa, Europe, Asia, America and the Caribbean. In other words, our members are a reflection of the entire African diaspora. We produced the first survey on PAD in Denmark in late 2015 and it was published January 2016. We have also organized various panels on racism, intersectionality and public debates highlighting racism and discrimination (i.e. anti-black racism and afrophobia) in the Danish society at a time where little discussion on these subjects took place. As well as produced the first survey on PAD in Denmark, AEC has been in contact with the DIHR since 2015 and has requested various measures regarding the safety and welfare of PAD in Denmark, specifically in relation to anti-black Racism and afrophobia in the Danish society.

We are a member-organization of the **European Network for People of African Descent (ENPAD)** and has worked closely with ENPAD to promote **the International Decade of People of African Descent (IDPAD)** in Europe and Denmark. We both advocate for a national action plan to be implemented in Denmark to combat structural racism in the many forms PAD face in the Danish society, as well as statistical data on PAD in social areas such as housing, education, health, the labor market among others. Even more so, in order for this to take place, iAEC are of the firm believe that it is important for DIHR to recognize PAD as a specific group of people particularly vulnerable to multiple forms of discrimination, i.e. anti-black racism, afrophobia as well as structural and institutional racism.

Our comprehension of the report **Afro-danskeres oplevelse af diskrimination i Danmark (2017)** is that it tries to deal with something called **everyday racism** (hverdagsracisme) within a small segment of PAD in Denmark who are telling about their experiences of discrimination through their own personal stories. However, racial discrimination in Denmark, especially against PAD, should and must also be tied to national and international legacies of European colonialism. In other words, we believe a structural and historical understanding of racial discrimination is lacking in order for this report to fully understand and comprehend what racial discrimination, i.e. anti-black racism and afrophobia, is, how and why it is happening against PAD as a specific group of people. More about that in the next sections.

Although the report lacks a full understanding of racial discrimination against PAD as a "structural" issue in Denmark, the report, as it is, can be used to open up a dialogue about institutional and structural racism in general. Through storytelling and personal experiences from the Afro-Danes themselves, it provides insight into some of the racial discrimination PAD are exposed to and also how it affects the different individuals who all have in common they have visible black African heritage, hence black experiences.

Before we go further, we would like to emphasize one specific term we use throughout our summary analysis, which is both used and recognized by the UN. In order to avoid confusion and to raise common understanding as we move along, it is necessary to emphasize that according to UN, **People of African descent (referred to as PAD throughout our summary analysis)** live in many countries of the world, either dispersed among the local population or in communities. The largest concentration can be found in Latin America and the Caribbean where estimates reach 150 million. Whether descendants of those Africans who were displaced to the Americas during the transatlantic slave trade many generations back, or more recently through migrants who have journeyed to the Americas, Europe, Asia and within Africa itself, PAD throughout the world make up some of the most marginalized groups. They are a specific victim group who continue to suffer discrimination as the historic legacy of the transatlantic slave trade. Even Afro-descendants, who are not directly descended from slaves, face racism and discrimination, which still persists today generations after the transatlantic slave trade ended. Some of the biggest issues PAD face include e.g. structural and institutional racial discrimination, inequality, marginalization and stigmatization, low levels of participation and under-representation in political and institutional decision-making processes etc. (Un.org, 2017a).

It is precisely for this reason AEC prefers to use the term PAD for People with African descent, also in this context where it is about Afro-Danes, i.e. descendants with at least one parent with black African heritage.

For more information on AEC, our work and focus on PAD in Denmark, please visit our website: <http://aec-denmark.dk>. You are also more than welcome to contact AEC on ☎ +45 50 83 0740 or ✉ [info@aec-cpk.dk](mailto:info@aec-cpk.dk) if you want further clarification regarding this summary analysis, or if you simply have comments and/or questions.

# 1. Purpose of the report

*“Formålet med rapporten “Afro-danskeres oplevelse af diskrimination i Danmark” er at undersøge om - og i givet fald hvordan - diskrimination opleves (...)”* (Institut for Menneskerettigheder, 2017a, 4).

Given that it is the Danish Institute of Human Rights (DIHR) who made the report, AEC is wondering why there is a need to investigate **whether** PAD experience racism and discrimination: What other information brings them to the conclusion that there is a need, which is from within the Danish society?

Unfortunately, PAD according to EU and **the Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey** experience racism and discrimination (i.e. anti-black racism and afrophobia) in their everyday lives while being citizens or residents in Denmark and across Europe. When asking Sub-Saharan Africans, living in Denmark specifically, whether they felt discriminated against their skin color, ethnic origin or religion in several areas of their lives, 41% answered yes to the question (Fra.europa.eu, 2017). This is also reflected in DIHR’s previous report **Hadforbrydelser i Danmark - Ni personlige beretninger (2017)** where the primary focus is hate crimes based on ethnicity and religion. Herein, out of the nine respondents interviewed for this report, only a few were described as PAD. Common to all of the PAD-respondents is the fact that they all have experiences with the use of the n-word (neger) against them as a crucial part of their experiences with hate crime (Institut for Menneskerettigheder, 2017b), and yet there is no dispute regarding it being a hate crime. From this report specifically, hate crimes, i.e. racial discrimination, do exist in Denmark, and PAD, among other groups, fall victim to this and are often being called the n-word in relation to hate crimes. This is established in language that DIHR utilizes in their view of these attacks as hate crime.

According to **the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)**, racial discrimination is:

*“...any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life”. (Unesco.org, 2017).*

Here, direct discrimination is described as:

*“For example, refusing to admit as students, employ or promote individuals because they are black, female, disabled or because of their sexual orientation” (Unesco.org, 2017)*

Whereas indirect discrimination is:

*“For example, setting age qualifications which discriminate against women who have had periods away from work because of family responsibilities”.* (Unesco.org, 2017).

Hence, it should not be a question of **whether** PAD experience discrimination in Denmark but **how** they experience it. We expect DIHR to be aware of the problem of discrimination and racism against PAD both because human rights is their area of work and because racism is a top priority according to the UN. The fact that it is stated that the purpose of the report is to investigate **whether** - and if so **how** - PAD experience discrimination indicates there have not been a proper research of the problem area or it may indicate that the increasing trends in Europe and Denmark in relation to racism and discrimination (anti-black racism and afrophobia specifically) against PAD have not been in mind.

As previously stated, AEC did the first survey on PAD in Denmark. It was delivered to DIHR but we are wondering whether the survey was utilized as a source of information and concern in any way, shape or form in relation to this report on Afro-Danes. Our survey has over 100 respondents with people of black African descent from a wide variety of PAD-segments, not excluding PAD living in Denmark from the Americas, Caribbean, Africa and Europe all expressing being racially discriminated against. Our survey further outlines racism in various aspects of Danish society such as employment, education, hate speech and lack of processing racist crimes towards PAD within the structures in society.

For further reference, the survey can be downloaded at:

[www.aecdenmark.dk/pad2015aecenglish.pdf](http://www.aecdenmark.dk/pad2015aecenglish.pdf).

## 2. Process of the report

The report gives a small timeline mentioning e.g. the 100th year anniversary of the sale of the former Danish West Indies as one of the reasons why there is more focus on racism and discrimination against PAD (Institut for Menneskerettigheder, 2017a, 10). However, we notice there is a lack of perspective for the many debates and discussions there have been from the Afro-Danes themselves, also in relation to the refugee crisis with PAD refugees. In this context, we think the report lacks a section or problem area concerned with ethnic discrimination and racism (i.e. anti-black racism and afrophobia) against PAD in Denmark, across Europe and in other parts of the world throughout time.

In the report, it is also stated that:

*“Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) offentliggjorde i 2017 endvidere en rapport, som fokuserer på oplevet diskrimination blandt muslimer i 15 EU-lande. Her er det generelle billede, at den oplevede diskrimination oftere rapporteres af muslimer med afrikansk baggrund end muslimer med fx mellemøstlig baggrund.”* (Institut for Menneskerettigheder, 2017a, 10).

Here, it is worth emphasizing that the reason why specifically black Muslims are even more vulnerable to racism and discrimination than other Muslim groups is likely due to the fact that they are targeted not only because they are Muslims **but also because they have visible black African heritage**, as somewhat stated in the report on page 10:

*“Her er det generelle billede, at den oplevede diskrimination oftere rapporteres af muslimer med afrikansk baggrund end muslimer med fx mellemøstlig baggrund.”* (Institut for Menneskerettigheder, 2017a).

Not only do Muslims of black African descent experience multiple forms of discrimination, as outlined in European network of legal experts in gender equality and non-discrimination (European Commission, 2015, 10) but e.g. LGBTQ as well as black women experience multiple / intersectional discrimination, as stated in the Afro-Danes report:

*“Forskelsbehandling kan tage afsæt i forskellige kategoriseringer af mennesker i forhold til deres køn, tro, race, etnicitet mv. som nævnt indledningsvist. I praksis kan der imidlertid være flere kategoriseringer i spil. Det vil sige, at selvom fokus for denne undersøgelse er race og etnicitet, så spiller køn og religion også ind i den måde, hvorpå diskriminationen praktiseres og opleves. Tre af de kvindelige interviewpersoner bærer tørklæde, og de nævner selv, at det er svært for dem at vurdere, om den diskrimination, de oplever, skyldes deres hudfarve, deres køn eller deres tørklæde.”* (Institut for Menneskerettigheder, 2017a, 13).

As written in the Afro-Danes report:

*"Institut for Menneskerettigheder har mandat til at fremme ligebehandling af alle uanset race eller etnisk oprindelse i Danmark"* (Institut for Menneskerettigheder, 2017a, 10).

But does the Institute have such departments? Is it within its mandate? And will it involve additional personnel? These are questions we believe need to be answered by the DIHR in order to know more about the processes they have implemented in relation to combating racial discrimination. Thus far, none of these answers appear in the Afro-Danes report.

If the above is not the case, we suggest the establishment of a department of discrimination particularly focused on racial discrimination towards PAD. We believe it is only right for DIHR to have a department focusing solely on PAD as a particular group significantly vulnerable to particular forms of racism and discrimination (i.e. anti-black racism and afrophobia). In this department, representatives of the Afro-Dane community in Denmark should be included, be it individuals, organizations or associations focusing on and/or working with PAD.

In accordance to **the Demand Catalog for People of African Descent and Black Europeans (2014)**, which EU member states received back in 2014, and since then also has been issued to DIHR:

*"We demand that such data be collected in collaboration with representatives from the relevant communities, on a voluntary basis, in accordance with the right to informational self-determination and in full respect of data protection standards including the anonymized processing of data"* (Initiative Black People in Germany, 2014, 1).

Also, according to the Universal declaration of Human Rights:

*"Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty."* (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, n.d.)

As well as the Paris principles:

*"... racial discrimination should be the primary focus of human rights institutes and is a priority when you see them in the universal human rights instruments. There are no other charters that have more instruments than gender and race. Race is the first ground of discrimination in article 2 of the universal human rights so monitoring pad, working with civil society, and creating a dialog should be a priority of the institute."* (Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice, 1978).

It is precisely these statements that support ours.

The Afro-Danes report also mentions that internationally, more attention has been aimed towards PAD. This is the reason why UN now demands concrete initiatives from UN states, which can promote equal treatment and combating of all forms of discrimination against PAD (Institut for Menneskerettigheder, 2017a, 10). Here, we strongly suggest that the report includes relevant EU statistics and CERD 34 in relation to combating discrimination against PAD (ICERD, 2011). As for the moment, the Afro-Danes report seems to be the only concrete initiative from Denmark to highlight and promote combating of all forms of discrimination against PAD. The timing of the report's release further indicates that although DIHR acknowledges its mandate, the Danish state has yet been able to implement any of the above.

The International Decade of People of African Descent calls for national action plans from member states. The UN has declared 2015-2024 the International Decade of People of African Descent. Therefore, the decade and also **CERD Gen Rec 34** calls for a national action plan from all EU member states presenting and implementing comprehensive measures, which can combat racial discrimination, i.e. anti-black racism and afrophobia against PAD specifically (Un.org, 2017b). In 2015, **the Concluding Observations for Denmark CERD** were issued to Denmark where the concern for lack of focus on PAD was mentioned, referring to the CERD 34 also issued to the state of Denmark (CERD, 2015). In relation to this, DIHR followed up with a parallel report issued to the Danish Government concerning "the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) in Denmark and Greenland" (The Danish Institute of Human Rights, 2015). However, there are no mention of specific groups of people such as PAD in DIHR's parallel report as in the original concluding observations for Denmark CERD. It therefore leaves AEC questioning the process and purpose of the report and why organizations, associations and the like working with PAD have not been included in the entire preparation and process of this report.

### 3. Clarification of concepts and terms

*“Begrebet afro-dansk forstås her (...) som dansk med afrikansk baggrund”*  
(Institut for Menneskerettigheder, 2017a, 4).

The definition of an Afro-Dane leaves many questions at AEC: What does it mean to be a Dane and what does it mean to have black African background? As DIHR probably know, Afro-Danes are only a small segment of PAD in Denmark. The term therefore requires further clarification: Who came up with this term? Where does it come from? When was it used for the first time by whom and in what context? Who or what people are using the term today and why? We believe the term needs further clarification. In other words, a comprehensive section or chapter where the above questions and more are answered in details will help to further elaborate a central term like Afro-Dane.

Also, when reading the report, there are some ambiguous definitions and uses of this central term. The term Afro-Danes seems like it is being used as a common name for all segments of PAD regardless of religion and nationality. It is also defined as a term used for PAD either born and/or raised in Denmark for a significant amount of time (how many years is however not detailed) and have attended Danish schools (Institut for Menneskerettigheder, 2017a, 12). The percentage of PAD living in Denmark for a significant amount of time **and** also having attended Danish school is with a high certainty not that big compared to those born and raised here with African descent. However, that requires additional research and statistical data to clarify.

Therefore, AEC have been able to read from DIHR's definitions on Afro-Danes throughout the report that there may have been a primary focus on African descendants with at least 1 parent with visible black African heritage. These descendants have also attended Danish school, as stated on page 12 in the report. This corresponds to about 22,000 of the approximately 44,000 people with black African descent according to Danmarks Statistik (Institut for Menneskerettigheder, 2017a, 6). According to the above observations, The Afro-Dane term likely also refers to Afro-Danes with Danish citizenship exclusively - despite the fact that all PAD is, to a greater or lesser extent, exposed to racism and discrimination (i.e. afrophobia and anti-black racism) in Denmark, citizenship or not.

We suggest to avoid further ambiguity regarding the true focus of the report IE to uncover if and how PAD are affected by racism in Denmark. To insure this task is comprehensive, we suggest DIHR to distinguish between Afro Dane as a sub group of People of African Descent (PAD), a term defined by the United Nations.

People of African Descent (PAD) is internationally recognized and utilized in current dialogue regarding racism on the EU- and UN-level. This terminology is equally utilized in the UN CERD recommendations, which Denmark has a mandate to work with. We further recommend the term Afro-Dane to be used as a sub group in the report in order to definitively understand differences in heritage and upbringing. A chapter that defines the central term "Afro-Dansker", as it is continuous for the report and its qualitative study, will be necessary in order to make such a clear distinction.

## 4. Linguistics

*“... interviewpersonerne har oplevet som diskriminerende som følge af, at de fremstår som en specifik synlig minoritetsgruppe: dansk med afrikansk baggrund” (Institut for Menneskerettigheder, 2017a, 4).*

Here, it is important to emphasize that it is not because we are “dansk med afrikansk baggrund” but because we have visible black African background, hence black African phenotypes. This is also something DIHR is aware of when stating that black Muslims, or Muslims with black African background, are more vulnerable (Institut for Menneskerettigheder, 2017a, 10). Therefore, this is a linguistic formulation that completely washes out the initial meaning. It is unfortunately an ongoing phrase throughout the report and wrongly formulated because there is nothing called an Afro-Danish appearance.

Instead, it should be clarified that PAD experience racism and discrimination because they have visible black African background and regardless of their national affiliation. The fact that some PAD are born and raised in Denmark is subordinate when they experience racism and discrimination in their everyday lives and on an institutional and structural level.

## 5. Theories

At AEC, we believe there is a general lack of theoretical framework and involvement of concepts like race, intersectionality, structural and institutional racism.

With Danish colonial history on the agenda for the 100th anniversary of the sales of former Danish West Indies, it is unfortunate that DIHR has made a report with so much potential to widen the debate about discrimination against PAD without even mentioning e.g. structural or institutional racism being the basis or foundation for structural racism and why it exists.

However, we believe it is also a testimony of how far we have come in the general debate about race, discrimination and structural racism in Denmark.

## 6. Actual and experienced discrimination

The Afro-Dane report distinguishes between actual discrimination and experienced discrimination (transl. faktisk og oplevet diskrimination):

*“Der er ikke nødvendigvis overensstemmelse mellem oplevet og faktisk diskrimination. Der kan være situationer, hvor der reelt sker en diskriminerende handling, uden at det opleves som sådan. Dette kan enten være, fordi den person, der udsættes for diskrimination, ikke er klar over, at der er tale om diskrimination, eller fordi personen selv oplever forskelsbehandlingen som legitim. Der kan desuden være situationer, der opleves som diskrimination, uden at der faktisk foregår en usaglig forskelsbehandling” (Institut for Menneskerettigheder, 2017a, 11).*

Choosing to distinguish between these two concepts make sense but also indicates there is someone or something entitled to define what is actual and experienced discrimination: Who contributes or is entitled to define experienced vs actual discrimination?

Theories, concepts and theories about e.g. race, intersectionality, power, structural and institutional racism among others can clarify this even more. In addition, working with representatives of NGOs, groups and associations of the population and materials produced and made available by such groups are worth looking into.

## 7. Methodical considerations

As the Afro-Dane report describes, it is a qualitative study based on 25 individual semi structured interviews (with PAD who can identify themselves as Afro-Danes) accompanied with 5 semi structured interviews with 3 NGOs and 2 debaters all of which have in common that they work with or focus on PAD (Institut for Menneskerettigheder, 2017a. 11-12). Among the NGOs are Afro Empowerment Center Denmark (AEC).

We think there is a lack of some methodological considerations regarding the use of qualitative methods as well as the advantages and disadvantages of using qualitative methods to meet the purpose of the report. In addition, we think there is also a lack a methodological consideration in terms of what empirical data DIHR have selected from the total amount of collected data and why. Transcriptions or the like included as examples in a separate document or as attachments in an appendix would have helped clarify DIHR's empirical data. In relation to that, it has also been noticeable how interviews with NGOs and debaters are not visible in the Afro-Dane report or neither emphasized in terms of what and how this part of DIHR's empirical data has been used.

To ensure a thorough report, we believe it is important that qualitative studies are backed up with additional methods. Since no theories or concepts of race, structural and institutional racism are mentioned, used or otherwise included, we think the report's qualitative study can be further improved and worked with.

In addition, it is worth emphasizing that because there seems to be a primary focus on a small segment of PAD, cf. Afro-Danes, it is again a bit unfortunate to let 25 qualitative semi structured interviews be representative of the rest of the PAD-community in Denmark without further methods to support the study. This is also said to be the case in your previous report **Hadforbrydelser i Danmark - Ni personlige beretninger (2017)**, which emphasizes the lack of quantitative data to support the report's empirical data (Institut for Menneskerettigheder, 2017b, 5).

## 8. Conclusion

Although we are accepting of this first report by the DIHR on PAD and its ability to open up a real discussion with the state regarding many of the challenges that African-born descendants have in their life situation, it is necessary to review the report, its missings and shortcomings.

As previously described, AEC's understanding of the report is that it tries to highlight what is called everyday racism against Afro-Danes as well as provide an insight into how the individual with black African background understands, deals with and is influenced by everyday racism.

Unfortunately, we can conclude there is no understanding of everyday racism's foundation, which is e.g. structural and institutional racism and especially the link to European and also Danish colonial history. Whether or not Afro-Danes experience racism and discrimination are not debatable since there already are tons of sources and statistics from the EU and the UN, which would have been beneficial to include in order to highlight racial discrimination (i.e. anti-black racism and afrophobia) against PAD. In these sources there are also definitions of e.g. discrimination and racial discrimination in its direct and indirect form, which is something AEC expected DIHR would involve or otherwise keep in mind in relation to their research and as the report was written. It is questioned whether and if so how the NGOs and debaters, as well as their work and focus on people of African descent (PAD), have been included in the report's focus and purpose as well.

Taking into account the European and thus Danish colonial history, and thus this relation to the different forms of racial discrimination PAD face, we can also conclude that the DIHR has not sufficiently included sources from Danish news outlets where specifically Afro-Danes have debated and discussed via articles, social media and on TV their everyday lives in terms of experiencing and facing racism and discrimination (i.e. anti-black racism and afrophobia) in Denmark. Racism and discrimination against people of African descent is not new but is unfortunately described in the Afro-Dane report as something that is newly highlighted in relation to the 100th anniversary of the sale of the Danish West Indies, and the fact that the UN declares 2015-2024 the international decade for people of African descent. In other words, DIHR has not included (or maybe even chosen to overlook) the Demand Catalog for People of African Descent and Black Europeans (2014), CERD Gen Rec 34 and the Concluding Observations for Denmark CERD, all highlighting racism and discrimination against African-born descendants.

The DIHR fails to mention the concept of intersectionality, although on a few lines they point out that black Muslims are a more vulnerable group compared to Muslims. AEC wants the concept of intersectionality to be mentioned because intersectionality is an issue that is almost impossible to avoid looking at concerning people with African descent, but also since Black Muslim women risk being overlooked in this report despite being able to be described as Afro-Danes as well. This is also in line with the lack of theoretical framework set by the report, where theories and concepts of racist theory, structural and institutional racism, white privilege, etc. would have been obvious to include in order to give the reader a good understanding of what the different forms of discrimination against people with African descendants primarily consist of. However, this is not included whatsoever. In addition, the DIHR makes a distinction between actual and experienced discrimination, which on the surface makes sense but needs further explanation with the missing theories, concepts and reflections: who is really entitled to define what is actually and experienced discrimination?

Clarification on terms and concepts is lacking, and especially for the central term Afro-Danish, which is continuously used throughout the report. The term is first used as inclusive for anyone with African descent, but later it is defined as a person with at least 1 parent with a black African background, a person who has either been born or raised in Denmark or has been in Denmark for many years and has attended the Danish school system. In other words, we conclude the report is about descendants of African background, which is a smaller segment of the larger group, cf. people with African descent (PAD). Therefore, in order to avoid further ambiguity regarding the focus of the report, it is necessary for DIHR to distinguish between Afro-Danes as a subgroup of People of African Descent (PAD), which is a term defined by the UN. Here, we also conclude that when using the term Afro-Dane, it is also in order to emphasize a particular appearance, cf. "Afro-Danish appearance". However, this is linguistically wrong, as the Danish affiliation is not the reason why Afro-Danes experience racism and discrimination. Rather, it is due to the black African appearance, cf. black African background and visible phenotype regardless of national affiliation.

Finally, we conclude that the report, in comparison with previous reports from the DIHR, lacks methodological considerations in qualitative studies as well as the advantages and disadvantages qualitative methods have for the purpose of the report. Compared to the DIHR report on hate crimes (2017), DIHR themselves point out the missing quantitative data to investigate hate crimes. Therefore, we wonder why the DIHR has not yet made any or similar methodological considerations in terms of this Afro-Dane report.

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