

An Apology to the Continent and Peoples of Africa

We, the undersigned:

- Apologise for the crimes committed by the British against the continent and peoples of Africa during the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras.
- Acknowledge the ongoing effects and legacies of colonialism, and see formal apology as only the first step towards a new relationship between Africa and Britain.
- Hope that this petition will help address the abject failure of Britain and its people to recognise the crimes of Empire and to accept appropriate responsibility for those crimes.

Furthermore, we acknowledge that no apology will ever be enough. This petition does not attempt to right the wrongs of the past (indeed, it could not), but is instead an expression of our moral obligations as conscientious human beings. These inalienable but neglected obligations demand a formal recognition of the crimes committed by our forebears in our names.

It is not our intention to provide a conclusive or scholarly account of British colonialism. As ordinary British citizens, our intention is primarily to recognise and apologise for the brutality of our Empire and our wars of Empire, and for the loss of life, wealth and dignity that these aggressions entailed.

That said, following this statement is a series of more specific apologies, offered to the present-day African nations that suffered British aggression in various ways. It is far from an exhaustive or complete history of British colonialism in Africa. After a brief note about the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, our individual apologies are listed in alphabetical order by name of the present-day country. We acknowledge that many of Britain's victims (particularly those further back in history) would not recognise these nations. We also acknowledge that given the vastness of Africa and the duration of British aggression, a complete account is impossible. The following summaries are only intended to provide additional context to our apology. Thus we issue another, more general, apology – to any groups that this petition ignores.

It should also be noted that this document only discusses the role of *British* colonialism, as we cannot apologise for the other European nations that committed crimes on African soil. However, we acknowledge the terrible actions of our European neighbours, who were often no better than Britain. We implore the citizens and governments of France, Portugal, Holland, Germany and all nations on Earth who were involved in the subjugation of Africa, to recognise their past actions and apologise in a timely and appropriate manner.

It is a task for historians and the global public to investigate and discuss the legacies of British (and wider European) colonialism, and is a task that will be of importance for centuries. As such, some may take issue with the names, figures and dates quoted below. We encourage everyone, signatories and otherwise, to do their own research into these events, and question commonly-held histories everywhere.

The Slave Trade

We apologise for Britain's crucial part in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, which caused the deaths of between 40 and 100 million Africans over a period of 300 years. We recognise that slavery built the

British Empire and facilitated its brutal work – in Africa and elsewhere. We also recognise that the spoils of this centuries-long crime still fill British coffers today, and many wealthy British families owe their comfort to the forced labour of millions of Africans.

Botswana

We apologise for the seizure of present-day Botswana and the creation of the British Protectorate of Bechuanaland. We apologise for the British part in the European settlements and wars of conquest that created death, dependency and disadvantage. We apologise for the greedy extraction of labour and resources from the region now known as Botswana, and for the way in which the British state has meddled in Botswanan affairs during and since Independence.

Cameroon

We apologise for the wars of Empire that saw Britain fight both the French and German colonialists on the land now known as Cameroon (and part of Nigeria following the partition on Independence). We apologise for the Imperial violence that occurred on your land. We apologise for the theft of labour and resources, and the way your nation was treated as a commodity to be fought over by Europeans.

Egypt

We apologise for the invasion of Egypt and the skewing of the Egyptian economy towards cotton, a deliberate ploy to engender dependency on Britain. These tactics, combined with violence, were used to turn Egypt into a mere cog in the Imperial British machine. We apologise for Britain's military aggression, both during and after the colonial period. Britain had no right to interfere so belligerently in your affairs, and, like all of Britain's victims, Egypt deserves much more than this.

Gambia

We apologise to present-day Gambia, which separated from the British Sierra Leone colony in 1888. We apologise for the invasion of your land, the subjugation of its inhabitants and the theft of your resources and labour. We apologise for the way your nation was treated as a strategic possession in the callous and inhuman game of Empire.

Ghana

We apologise for the violent seizure of the lands belonging to present-day Ghana, including Togoland, the Ashanti and Fante Protectorates and 'the Gold Coast' - named by the colonialists due to the substantial gold deposits in its soils. We apologise for the theft of this gold and other resources. We also acknowledge that the region was used as a crucial staging post in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, an incalculable crime that was sustained to a large degree by British greed and

racism. We apologise for Britain's cynical use of "Divide and Rule" tactics, used extensively across the British Empire and a cause of much lasting trauma.

Kenya

We apologise for the invasion and colonisation of Kenya and other East African nations by the British. Starting in 1895, Kenya suffered almost a century of brutal occupation motivated by Imperial greed. Between the years 1952 and 1960, this act of war led to the murder of around 30,000 Africans by the British Army in Kenya alone. The British committed unspeakable acts of torture against Kenyan civilians – men, women and children. Like many of Britain's crimes, these atrocities occurred within living memory, thus highlighting the urgent need for recognition and reparation.

Lesotho

We apologise for the invasion of Lesotho and the annexation of the region into the British controlled Cape Colony in 1871. We recognise the violence used by the British to seize power, and the violence with which resistance to British rule was met. We apologise for the wars with Boer settlers which occurred on your land, and for any and all loss of life, resources and dignity. We apologise for the way in Lesotho was treated as a vehicle for British power, and we regret the appalling and racist mind-set that made these actions possible.

Malawi

We apologise to the territory now known as Malawi, invaded and colonised as British Central Africa, Nyasaland, and later, Rhodesia. We apologise for the unwarranted imposition of British rule, and the violence which was required to keep it in place. We deeply regret the actions of our ancestors and the way they used your land and your peoples as a means to an end – British wealth and power. We also acknowledge the way in which later British governments undermined the sovereignty of Malawi following Independence.

Nigeria

We apologise for the criminal conquest of West Africa that led to the formation of present-day Nigeria. Having annexed Lagos 1861, Britain continued to formally occupy the region until 1960. We apologise for the imposition of British rule and the hardships and violent excesses that accompanied this imposition. We offer our apologies to all of present-day Nigeria's cultures and civilisations that suffered at the hands of the British. We note in particular the egregious "Benin Expedition" of 1897, in which Benin was razed, looted and its inhabitants murdered. We apologise also for the extreme ignorance demonstrated by the British in their approach to the Nigerian colonies, and for the arrogant way they divided and re-divided the country. We recognise that the actions of the British have worsened and even caused much of the ethnic conflict in Nigeria's history – conflicts that have claimed the lives of many, many thousands of people. For this we also offer our apologies.

Sierra Leone

We apologise for the 160 year occupation of Sierra Leone by the British, and repression and exploitation inflicted during this period. Formal British rule (1800-1960) followed earlier centuries of abuse by European powers as a base for the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. We apologise for Britain's cruelty and greed, and how this has created and exacerbated conflicts in Sierra Leone. We recognise that the horrific effects of British colonialism are still being felt now, and will do into the future.

Somalia

We apologise to Somalia for the criminal establishment of the British Somaliland Protectorate on your soil. We apologise for the wars waged against the inhabitants of present-day Somalia, wars of unjustifiable foreign aggression. We apologise also for the British part in the wars of Empire with other colonial powers. We apologise for the way that British violence and interference has led to instability and conflict post-independence, and has caused the deaths of so many in the region.

South Africa

We apologise to the region presently known as South Africa, for the many, many wars of European Imperialism that took place on your soil. We apologise for the crucially significant involvement of Britain in these wars, and the theft of your natural resources for hundreds of years. We apologise for the incalculable death and destruction that Britain brought to South Africa, and the first uses of the concentration camp on your land. We apologise for the contributions Britain made towards lasting conflict and tension in South Africa, and we regret every life and piece of wealth that was taken by Britain and its allies. For what our nation did in the Cape, Natal, Lesotho, the Orange Free State, the Transvaal and elsewhere, we are sorry.

North and South Sudan

We apologise for the criminal invasion and occupation of the lands that make up present-day North and South Sudan. We apologise for the violent and unfair British administration of the region, which led to the deaths of many thousands of people. We apologise for the brutality with which resistance to British rule was met, and we apologise for the exploitation of Anglo-Egyptian Sudan as a pawn in European colonial geopolitics. Britain had no right to behave the way that it did, and Britain has failed miserably to treat the Sudanese region with the respect it deserves.

Swaziland

We apologise for Britain's Imperialist wars that took place in Swaziland. We apologise for the violent crimes perpetrated against the Swazi people themselves, and the wars with Boer settlers which took place on your land. We apologise for the subsequent period of British occupation of Swaziland from 1906 to 1968, and for the criminal acts of partition and theft of land that occurred during this period.

We apologise for the insults that these acts were, and for the colonial exploitation of Swazi labour and resources.

Tanzania

We apologise to the region that makes up present-day Tanzania, for the wars of Empire between Britain and Germany, and the unjustifiable and violent imposition this was on your nation. We apologise for the way Tanzanian lives, resources and labour were used as a means through which Britain could advance its belligerent and criminal agenda. We apologise for the formal colonisation of the region as the Tanganyika Territory that was established in 1919, and for the way Britain skewed the economy for its own needs.

Uganda

We apologise for the invasion and aggressive establishment of the “British Protectorate of Uganda” that existed from 1894 to 1962. Like many of Britain’s victims, colonial occupation was preceded by a period of one-sided trade, in this case organised by the British East Africa Trading Company. We note the skewing of the Ugandan economy in the interests of the British, and the legacy of patronage and dependency this led to. We offer our sincere apologies for the unwarranted and unjustified violence demonstrated by Britain during the colonial period, and regret the implications this has had post-Independence.

Zambia

We apologise for the criminal annexation of present-day Zambia by the British Government that started in 1895. We acknowledge and are disgusted by the way the criminal Cecil Rhodes arrogantly named the region after himself. We apologise for the plundering of your natural resources, the mining industry in particular, which was single-mindedly undertaken as a way of enriching Colonial powers. We apologise also for the undignified and often violent way in which your nation was treated.

Zimbabwe

We apologise for the invasion and colonisation of Zimbabwe, branded “Southern Rhodesia” by the egotistical thief Cecil Rhodes. The mercantile theft of present-day Zimbabwe in the 1890’s led to a period of appallingly racist minority white governments, and the deaths of unknown thousands of Africans. As elsewhere, these crimes were motivated by simple greed and a hunger for resources and geopolitical prestige. We recognise also that Britain has continued to meddle in Zimbabwean affairs since independence, and has never officially recognised or atoned for the horrendous events of the past.

Conclusion

Britain murdered countless millions of Africans over hundreds of years, both directly and indirectly. These terrible crimes were motivated purely by greed and the aggressive pursuit of power. For centuries, Britain was Africa's live-in thief. Even after independence, many trade arrangements and relations of domination persist, in forms sadly reminiscent of their colonial-era forebears. Britain's ongoing meddling in Africa continue to create and exacerbate tensions on the continent, and represents an unacceptable area of continuity between a brutal past and a delicate present.

As mentioned in the beginning statement, this list is far from complete, and represents a tiny snapshot of some of the worst episodes in Britain's criminal record. Furthermore it cannot do justice to the huge ethnic and historical diversity on the continent of Africa, and we extend our apologies to all who we have neglected in the text of this document.

The refusal to apologise for the clearly evidenced crimes of the past adds an insult to past injuries. The British state must apologise, but has so far failed to do so. The signatories of this petition agree that this is not good enough, and have seen fit to take this pressing issue into their own hands. We hope that in some small way, this apology will demonstrate our acknowledgement of the past, and our refusal to accept the ignorant outlook of many in Europe today. Too many in Europe would rather shrug their shoulders and forget the bloodshed that gave them their wealth and their power.

We do not ask for forgiveness, but instead offer a unilateral expression of regret and sorrow. We wish that we could offer more, and will continue to work for an official and satisfactory apology from the British government.