



# Landelijke India Werkgroep

## India Committee of the Netherlands

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### PRESS RELEASE

#### Dutch government criticises India on caste and Gujarat

#### India Committee of the Netherlands (ICN)\* urges for human rights dialogue at EU-India Summit in October

*The Minister of Foreign Affairs of The Netherlands, Dr. B.R. Bot has expressed his concern about caste discrimination and has criticised the Indian government on the present situation in Gujarat. He did this in response to a letter on these issues sent by eight Dutch NGO's, including the India Committee of the Netherlands (ICN).*

On the situation in Gujarat, where a mass murder of around 2.000 Muslims took place in February/March 2002 with state participation and support, he stated that "many court cases are not proceeding as they should, compensation measures are long overdue and discrimination continues".

Minister Bot also writes: "What happened in Gujarat is not a closed case".

The statements of Dr. Bot gain additional significance because the EU is usually not publicly addressing human rights issues in India and because of the fact that The Netherlands will, on behalf of the EU, be hosting and co-chairing the EU-India Summit. This Summit is provisionally set on October 14th 2004. A copy of the letter of Dr. Bot was also sent to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Dutch Parliament.

*The India Committee of The Netherlands (ICN) welcomes the statements by the Dutch government on caste discrimination and Gujarat. ICN urges the Dutch government and European Union to put the issue of caste discrimination in India and the situation in Gujarat on the agenda of the EU-India Summit in The Netherlands.*

On the issue of caste discrimination, relating to approximately 250 million people in South Asia and to specific communities in Japan and various African countries, Dr. Bot writes that he shares the concerns of the eight organisations on this issue. The Netherlands and the European Union are of the opinion, he says, that the issue of caste discrimination falls under discrimination on the basis of work and descent, as determined by the Committee Against Racial Discrimination. Therefore the Special Rapporteur Against Racism is the right person to report on caste discrimination.

The Dutch position on both caste discrimination and the developments in Gujarat is reinforcing the position of the European Parliament on both issues (see the relevant statements on both issues on

[http://www.indianet.nl/da\\_f\\_e.html](http://www.indianet.nl/da_f_e.html) and on [http://www.indianet.nl/rc\\_f\\_e.html](http://www.indianet.nl/rc_f_e.html)

*\* ICN is an independent advocacy NGO in solidarity with the poor and oppressed in India. It is a member of the International Dalit Solidarity Network ([www.idsn.org](http://www.idsn.org))*