



PRESS RELEASE
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India questioned on caste discrimination in the UN

On 10 April, the human rights situation of India was scrutinized by the Human Rights Council under the newly established Universal Periodic Review procedure. India was among the first countries up for review.

The Indian delegation presented its report to the Council projecting an image of the human rights situation which according to international and national human rights organisations is a far cry from reality. Broad-based evidence of human rights violations, including the continued discrimination and violence committed against India's 170 million Dalits, was largely ignored or played down.

During the questioning session, more than ten member states of the Council raised issues of human rights violations against "the Scheduled Castes" and other marginalized groups.

Several countries asked what measures the government had taken to implement legislation to protect Dalits, especially Dalit women, against discrimination and caste related violence given the continued impunity for crimes against Dalits. Other countries inquired if India had followed up on the recommendations of the Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) to ensure equality before the law and equal treatment in society for Dalits. Several countries were also concerned with implementation of the laws abolishing child labour, which largely affect Dalits and other marginalised groups.

The continued non-compliance with several international conventions ratified by India is a serious concern to the human rights community. The Indian government tended to brush aside the concerns raised as "problems to be tackled nationally", irrespective of the country's obligations under international human rights treaties.

Dr. Umakant of the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights states: "India has once again demonstrated an unwelcome degree of arrogance and rhetorics in reporting and discussing the country's human rights issues under the UN human rights system. It undermines the Government of India's claim of maintaining their commitments to the UN human rights mechanisms".

The National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR), the International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN) and the International Movement against All Forms of Racism and Discrimination (IMADR) appeal to the Indian Government to move away from a state of denial of the scale and seriousness of caste-based discrimination towards seeking constructive solutions with the assistance of the international community.

The organisations also urge the Human Rights Council to make immediate arrangements for the adoption of the draft "UN Principles and Guidelines for the elimination of discrimination based on

work and descent" - a global framework to address caste-based discrimination that affects an estimated 260 million people worldwide.

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References:

Draft UN principles and guidelines for the effective elimination of discrimination based on work and descent prepared by experts of the former Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection on Human Rights

http://www.idsн.org/Documents/un/pdf/final_report_discrimination_on_work_and_decent.pdf

Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination adopted in March 2007 http://www.idsн.org/Documents/un/pdf/CERD_concl_obs_India.pdf