

The Dalits issue in the parliamentary debate on human rights on June 30, 2014

Voordewind:

Finally I have two more issues: the Dalits and child labour

Minister Timmermans:

Mr. Voordewind has called attention to the position of Dalits. During a bilateral meeting at the ASEM summit in September last year, I had a very long talk with my Indian colleague about this issue. In India, people are very quickly heavily annoyed if you bring this up, but my colleague was very open and constructive about it. That was striking. He has been replaced by now, but that has nothing to do with our discussion as there have been elections. The issue was also raised in the EU-India human rights dialogue. It is known that on this issue a lot is going on in India. There is a lot public debate, there are many very tragical cases now reaching the world's media, but they also occurred before. I think things will begin the move. Through the Human Rights Fund, we will continue to support projects of the Human Rights Law Network and the Socio-Legal Information Centre in order to contribute to improving the situation of Dalits.

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Questions on Dalits

Question 126

What have you done and what are you doing to raise the issue with India regarding the large-scale sexual violence against Dalit women and girls, mostly with impunity and often meant as retaliation to and harassment of Dalit communities claiming their rights?

Answer

Sometimes there are horrific incidents, most recently the rape and murder of two girls aged 12 and 14 years old, in Uttar Pradesh. The answers to the written questions about this case went to the parliament on 19 June last.

The Netherlands drew attention to this issue on June 11 in the Human Rights Council during the discussion of the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women. The position of women in India is also raised by the Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during political consultations in New Delhi on 11 June.

The new government of India announced, in response to the incident in Uttar Pradesh, on June 9th by mouth of President Pranab Mukherjee a zero tolerance policy, including reform of the legal framework and supervision of the implementation. The recently appointed Prime Minister Modi endorsed this on 11 June in his first speech to the parliament.

Question 128

What activities have been undertaken to monitor the lawsuit against the winner of the 2012 Human Rights Tulip Award, Marimuthu Bharathan, and to follow this up with possible action? What action has been taken against the fact that his work was hindered by the Indian authorities? Did he receive the price already and is it used? And if so, for what?

Answer

As is known, there is a judicial inquiry into the alleged involvement of Mr. Bharathan in a murder case. The research means that Bharathan must report weekly to the police. Besides this restriction, he continues his work with his NGO. Bharathan does not yet have the proper permits to be allowed to receive money from abroad. The ministry is talking with him on how to get the award money to the project supported by him.

Question 129

What activities have you undertaken with respect to the position of Dalits and Dalit women after the presentation of the Human Rights Tulip Award 2012 on the basis of the motion Voordewind of June 2011 (32735, No. 8) which called for an active approach in the UN and the EU?

Answer

The position of Dalits has been extensively discussed by Minister Timmermans in his talks with the Indian Foreign Minister at the ASEM summit in November 2013 in New Delhi. In addition, the issue was raised during the annual EU human rights dialogue in November 2013. The Netherlands is also a major contributor to various UN institutions active in India. Additionally various projects of the Human Rights Fund do reach also Dalits and more specifically Dalit women. See also the answer to question 127.

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