

19th June 2014

Answers of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to parliamentary questions (submitted June 11, 2014) by the members Voordewind (ChristianUnion), Van Bommel (Socialist Party), Van Ojik (GreenLeft), Van der Staaij (SGP) and Sjoerdsma (D66) on sexual violence against (Dalit) women in India.

Question 1

Have you taken notice of the intense media attention about the gang rape and killing of two Dalit girls in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh¹ and the recent brochure "*Dalit Women Without Rights - Victims of sexual violence are demanding their rights*" of FNV Mondiaal and the India Committee of the Netherlands that describes the nature, severity, extent and causes of this major social problem, as well as the opposition to it?²

Answer

Yes.

Question 2

Have you taken notice of the reports on India and Bangladesh by the Special UN Rapporteur on Violence against Women, in which she states that caste discrimination is a major cause of violence that continues from generation to generation and "condemns women to a life of exclusion, marginalization and disadvantage in every sphere of life" and makes them frequently victims of forced labour and forms of modern slavery?³

Answer

Yes.

Question 3

What action have you been taking by now to draw attention to the worrying position of Dalit women and girls that are discriminated because of their caste and suffer from various forms of (sexual) violence? What other efforts are you planning to undertake on this issue?

Answer

During the conversation with my Indian colleague at the Foreign Ministers Meeting in New Delhi on November 11, 2013, we talked extensively about the situation of Dalits. During recent consultations the gruesome incident in Uttar Pradesh was raised by the Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Question 4

Are you in this context - during the 26th session of the UN Human Rights Council willing - willing to raise the issue of caste discrimination and the impunity of sexual violence against Dalit women at the Interactive Dialogue with the Special UN Rapporteur on Violence against Women, the interactive dialogue with the Working Group on Discrimination against Women and the annual one-day discussion on women's rights?

Answer

The Netherlands has raised the issue of the position of marginalized groups and multiple discrimination during the interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women.

Question 5

Are you willing during these dialogues to request additional measures against the multiple forms of discrimination and violence against Dalit women in India and Bangladesh, including strengthening the legal system in both countries to combat the widespread violation of these human rights effectively?

Answer

The President of India, President Pranab Mukherjee, announced on 9 June this year a policy of zero tolerance with regard to violence against women, including a reform of the legal framework and supervision on its implementation. The recently elected Prime Minister Modi reinforced this on 11 June during his first speech before the parliament.

The Netherlands will continue to draw attention to the issue of violence against women, multilaterally, through the EU and in bilateral dialogues. During the upcoming session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, the Netherlands will once again, together with France, propose a resolution against violence against women.

Question 6

Are you willing to co-sponsor for the Side Event on 'Violence against women and girls in communities affected by caste' organized by among others Human Rights Watch and the International Dalit Solidarity Network - with High UN Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay as keynote speaker – and to express your opinion on the topic during this Side Event?

Answer

So far two European countries have agreed to co-sponsor the event. To increase the effectiveness of this event, it is important that not only European countries will co-sponsor this event, but also countries from other parts of the world. So, co-sponsorship of the Netherlands has no added value at the moment.

Question 7

Are you willing to raise the issue of (sexual) violence against (Dalit) women in your bilateral contacts with the Indian Government?

Answer

See the answer to question 3.

Question 8

Are you willing to answer these questions before June 17, 2014, when the UN Rapporteur Rashida Manjoo presents her reports?

Answer

Unfortunately this was not possible.

[translation by ICN]

1 Volkskrant, May 31, 2014: "In India is een vrouw al snel een hoer"

2 <http://www.dalits.nl/DalitVrouwenRechteloos.html>

3 <http://www.dalits.nl/DalitVrouwenRechteloos.html>