



INDIA COMMITTEE OF THE NETHERLANDS
Voor-Clarenburg 10, 3511 JE Utrecht, the netherlands
telefoon 030-311094

LANDELIJKE INDIA-WERKGROEP

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PRESS REPORT

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INDIA-RELATED GROUPS AND ALL MAIN POLITICAL PARTIES
IN THE NETHERLANDS CRITISIZE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION
IN INDIA

Recently a DECLARATION on the HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN INDIA has been published in the Netherlands, signed by about 20 Dutch Committees and Groups concerned with India, as well as by the 7 main political parties in the Netherlands (having 144 seats out of a total 150 seats in parliament). These parties are: Christian Democratic Party (CDA), Liberal Party (VVD), Social Democratic Party (PVDA), Democrats (D'66), Radical Liberals (PPR), Pacifist Socialist Party (PSP) and Communist Party (CPN).

In the DECLARATION great concern and shock is expressed on the systematic violation of fundamental human rights in India today.

The Indian government and other authorities (at different levels) are being criticized for largely failing to implement various laws and other measures which could guarantee or promote the implementation of fundamental human rights, especially for Harijans, tribals and other oppressed minorities in India.

Besides, as the Dutch committees and political parties do believe, the police (and other government officials) often prove to be involved in the tremendously rising amount of 'atrocities' in India.

Tapan K. Bose's film "An Indian Story" on the Bhagalpur blindings visualises this in a shocking way. Massacres, so called 'encounters' and other forms of repression in Manipur, Monghyr, Sadhupur, Deoli are only some of the examples of what (euphemistically) is called 'incidents'.

The Declaration is an initiative taken by the INDIA COMMITTEE OF THE NETHERLANDS and the HUMANISTIC COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS and has been formulated after consultation with AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL (Netherlands section). Amnesty International is endorsing the Declaration on the issues linked up with their mandate.

The fastly deteriorating human rights situation in India prompted these organizations to protest against violation of human rights in India, to make the Dutch people aware of this violation and to promote solidarity with the oppressed and with organizations actively trying to protect their rights.

Since the 'Human Rights in India' - issue is almost completely new to the Dutch people - including the political parties - (the myth of being 'the biggest democracy in the world' is fading only very slowly) the Declaration has been formulated in general terms.

Until recently there has hardly been any public and political discussion on the Dutch relations with India, including the big amount of development aid given to the Indian government, and including the economic relations between India and the Netherlands.

Along with the Declaration an elaborate background paper has been published to explain the socio-economic, religious-cultural, political and sexual forms of oppression in India.

In the month of september the Declaration along with a list of undersigning organizations WILL BE PRESENTED TO THE (not yet known) NEW AMBASSADOR of INDIA in the Netherlands.

A delegation representing the political parties as well as the joint India-groups and -organizations is planning to have a discussion with the new Ambassador on the Declaration. During the discussion the delegation expects to hear the Ambassador's response to the Declaration and the possible recommendations the Indian Ambassador could make to the Indian government in order to improve the human rights situation in India.

While urging in the Declaration upon "...the Dutch government and parliament regarding Dutch development cooperation with India to direct this aid primarily at improving the living conditions of the poorest groups", the political parties now have to work on the implementation of this.

The definite cancellation of the 'Trawler-programme' which was supposed to be financed with aid (but which would harm the traditional fishermen of India) is a good starting point for this.

But since around two thirds of the Dutch aid to India consists of fertilizer supplies (in the period 1978-1981 worth Rs 250 crores) which are mainly supporting the large farmers in India, the Dutch government doesn't act in accordance with the aim of helping the poor sections in India

Besides acting on the Human Rights issue as such, the India Committee of the Netherlands expects the Dutch political parties, in accordance with the Declaration they signed, to redirect the aid and other economic relations with India in such a way as to benefit primarily the now poor and oppressed groups in India.

On behalf of the India Committee of the Netherlands:


Mr. Twan Custers

P.S. A Press Report on the cancellation of the 'trawler-programme' and on the Dutch fertilizer supplies to India is forthcoming in a couple of weeks.

DECLARATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN INDIA

WE ARE DEEPLY PERTURBED about the fact that the fundamental human rights, as laid down by the international community of peoples in the United Nations, are being systematically and in many different ways violated in India today.

About 350 million people in India, out of a total population of nearly 700 million, live below the poverty line. These hundreds of millions suffer from religious, socio-economic as well as political forms of oppression which is in complete defiance of these fundamental human rights.

Some of the most effected groups who suffer from this oppression are: - the 'untouchables' or Harijans, which total about

100 million

- the 40 million original inhabitants of India: the tribals

In a number of respects, especially in the socio-economical and political field, the human rights of the more than 200 million other Indians living below the absolute poverty line, are also being violated.

The Indian government has passed numerous laws directed at improving the living conditions of the poorest groups in general and the Harijans and Tribals in particular. The declared land - reforms, the abolition of untouchability and the reservation of jobs for Harijans and Tribals are some examples of this. These laws, however, have not brought about any substantial improvement in there situation. Only 10% of the declared land - reforms have been carried out, 'untouchability' is still a practice on a large scale and only a very small percentage of Harijans and Tribals have benefitted from the job-reservation system. One very important reason for this failure seems to be the political unwillingness which Indian governments display to actually implement these and other laws.

In addition, WE WISH TO EXPRESS OUR GREAT CONCERN AND SHOCK about the increasing phisical violence which is being committed against Harijans and Tribals, as a result of their individual and collective protest against the violation of their rights. In the Indian press quite regularly information is given about massacres, in which groups of Harijans and Tribals fall victim to retaliatory measures by vested rural interests. These massacres are officially registered as 'atrocities' by the Government Commission on Scheduled Castes and Tribes. Other acts in the category of atrocities are rape, arson and phisical violence. We are not talking here about the 'usual' crimes, but about crimes which have been committed in reprisal to Harijan and Tribal resistance against the inhuman condition they live in. The number of registered atrocities has increased dramatically from 8860 cases in 1974 to 13746 in 1980. Furthermore, one must keep in mind that these figures only reflect a small part of the actually committed atrocities against Harijans and Tribals. The fact that the police is often either actively involved in the 'incidents', or gives protection to the aggressors, indicates the dreadful enormity of the problem.

WE ARE STRONGLY CONVINCED that it is the responsibility of the Indian government and the international community to do their utmost in order to ensure the fundamental human rights in India.

WE ARE, HOWEVER, GREATLY CONCERNED about the fact that:

- The Indian government is failing largely to implement the existing laws regarding the creation of circumstances to guarantee and promote human rights in the religious-cultural, socio-economic and political field, especially for Harijans and Tribals;
- The Indian government has taken inadequate new steps to promote the implementation of these same fundamental human rights;
- The Indian government has taken insufficient actual steps to counter the increasing number of 'atrocities' committed on Harijans and Tribals;
- The Indian government itself is passing laws, such as the National Security Act (which enables preventive detention) and the ESMA (prohibiting strikes in key-industries), which are not in accordance with fundamental human rights;
- The international community is insufficiently aware of the large-scale violation of human rights in India and is not taking enough action against it.

THE UNDERSIGNED URGENTLY REQUEST

- The Indian government to take all measures which could guarantee or improve the human rights situation in India;
- The Dutch government and parliament, as well as the international organizations in which they are represented, to express their shock with regard to the large-scale violation of human rights in India and to insist upon adequate measures by the Indian government;

Furthermore, WE URGE UPON the Dutch government and parliament, regarding the Dutch development cooperation with India, to direct development aid primarily at improving the living conditions of the poorest groups in India.

THE UNDERSIGNED ALSO URGENTLY CALL UPON all Dutch social organizations such as political parties, trade unions, employers-, youth-, students-, farmers-, women-, and private development aid organizations, to discuss the above mentioned issues within their own group, to approach related Dutch, Indian, European or International organizations and urge them to take a stand on it and to request the Indian government to take concrete steps to terminate the violation of human rights in India.

THE UNDERSIGNED EXPRESS THEIR SOLIDARITY with the activities of those Indian and non-Indian organizations attempting to protect and improve the fundamental human rights of all Indians.