



National Coalition for Strengthening SCs and STs (Prevention of Atrocities) Act

PRESS RELEASE

Daily average of crimes registered under the SC and ST Prevention of Atrocities (PoA) Act is 93 crimes. In comparison, the conviction rate is a mere 30 %, with over 80% of atrocity cases pending trial each year.

New Delhi, 25 Oct 12:

25 October, 2012, Delhi: On November 26, 2012, it will be 63 years when the Constituent Assembly adopted the Constitution of India. “A range of advancements across spheres in this period notwithstanding, the lot the *Dalits* and *Adivasis* in the country has not improved” stated Dr Prasad Sirivella, General Secretary, National Dalit Movement for Justice. Speaking about the abysmal failure of the system, he added that even after 63 years, Dr. Ambedkar’s vision of equality and non-discrimination remains unfulfilled. He pointed out that while the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) shows that between 1995 and 2007 the average number of crimes registered under the SCs and STs Prevention of Atrocities Act (PoA) 1989 was 33956, bringing the ***daily average to 93 crimes***, the average conviction rate during the same period was only 30.3 percent. “It is significant that over 80% of atrocity cases are pending trial each year, despite the creation of Special Courts to ensure the speedy trial of such cases,” he emphasized

Commenting on this, Dr Vimal Thorat, Convenor, All India Dalit Mahila Adhikar Manch stated that, “Dalit and Adivasi women are particularly vulnerable to violence committed against them as they often find themselves targeted for atrocities directed at themselves, their families and/or their communities, with little hope for justice in the aftermath.”

In this connection, it was also pointed out by Mr. Paul Diwakar of the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights that “with atrocities and rampant discrimination getting intensified, the *Dalits*’ and *Adivasis*’ assertiveness to claim their rightful places in the nation too has grown.”

Speaking on behalf of the **National Coalition for Strengthening the SCs/STs Prevention of Atrocities Act (NCSPA)** comprising around 150 NGOs from 18 states of India, Manjula Pradeep, Executive Director, Navsarjan Trust, Gujarat urged the government to put a stop to these heinous crimes by amending and effectively enforcing the SCs and STs (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989 (POA). “The time has come to review and assess the POA Act and strengthen affirmative action policy of the state”, she added

In fact, to commemorate 63rd year of the Constitution, the National Coalition for Strengthening the SCs/STs Prevention of Atrocities Act (NCSPA) is spearheading a **Mass Rally with 63000 Dalits and Adivasis at Ram Lila grounds in New Delhi on 23rd November 2012**. “Our rallying call is ‘Chalo Delhi’ for a **National Dalit and Adivasi Sammelan**,” stated Beena J Pallical of the Coalition.

Urging the government to take stock of the POA Act, Mr. V.A. Ramesh Nathan, Director, Social Awareness Society for Youth, Tamil Nadu, stated that “without the proper implementation of the POA Act we cannot end the atrocities inflicted on Dalits and adivasis and protect their constitutional rights.

As a representative of the National Coalition, Mr. Henri Tiphagne, Executive Director, People’s Watch, Tamil Nadu agreed with the government that the POA Act needs to be strengthened by bringing in appropriate amendments. Having said that, he cautioned the government that “unless legal changes is accompanied by a change in attitudes of all those who enforce the law – the judiciary, the bureaucracy and the police- who investigate the cases, nothing is going to change for a large section of the socially excluded communities of dalits and adivasis.”

This National Sammelan is planned to enable Dalit and Adivasi survivors of atrocities, community members and leaders of social movements and organisations from across the country to give a clear message and to make a forthright call to the entire nation to end discrimination and atrocities against Dalits and Adivasis and uphold the Constitution

The National Coalition urged the Government of India to complete its consultation process on the proposed amendments to the PoA Act, and to proactively get the amendments enacted in the 2012 Winter Session of Parliament. Speaking on behalf of the National Coalition, Shri P.S. Krishnan, Retired Secretary, Government of India appealed to everyone in the media, “to actively support this great effort to rid India of atrocities and the heinous practice of untouchability.”

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