

## **National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights – India**

National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights went through a wide-ranging restructuring process in 2008 and new leadership was established in mid-August. In the new structure there are four movements: Dalit women, Economic Rights, Civil & Political Rights, and Land Rights. Each movement will function as an autonomous unit and have a General Secretary (full-time) as leader of the movement. The Convenor of each movement will be an honorary person, and each movement will have its own constitution. A coordinating body, the NCDHR Coalition, will bring together the movements and organise joint advocacy initiatives and emerging initiatives. A Constituent Council will ensure that each movement and the coalition have their constitutions in place. This process started in 2008 and continues into 2009.

Some of the main activities of the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) in 2008 were linked to a National Consultation held together with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on 3-4 December 2007, where 50 national, regional and state level organisations participated. The aim of the consultation was to strengthen the implementation of the Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes Prevention of Atrocities Act from 1989 and its rules of 1995. The senior member of the NHRC, Mr. R.S. Kalha, chaired the consultation meeting. The result of the consultation was the formulation of 101 recommendations to the NHRC on different aspects of the Criminal Justice

Administrative System and Justice Delivery System, including recommendations on how the NHRC could strengthen it.

In March 2008, NCDHR organised three state level consultations with the NHRC in three atrocity prone states: Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The objectives of the consultations were to establish a mechanism to prevent atrocities in collaboration with the NHRC, to organise similar workshops in 12 other states, to link up different organisations and activists, and to identify well trained activists to monitor follow-up work in selected districts. The consultations were organised together with other Dalit organisations working at state level. Approximately 70-90 human rights activists participated in each of the two-day consultations in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Haryana.

Together with Wada Na Todo Abhiyan (Campaign on MDGs in India), the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA) and other grass-root organisations, the NCDHR conducted a protest rally in front of the National Parliament on 28th and 29th February 2008. At the rally, a memorandum for 'Implementation of Scheduled Castes Sub Plan in the Annual Budget from Centre and State Government' was submitted to the President of India, the Prime Minister of India, two Ministers, and the Chairperson of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes.

Other activities in 2008 included interventions with Centre and State Government on the Schedule Castes Sub Plan, as NCDHR successfully completed the second analysis of the Annual Budget of Centre Government and four state Governments (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Maharashtra). Several lobby meetings also took place with the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Dalit Members of the Parliament and State Governments to realize the Scheduled Castes Sub Plan. As a result of this work, memorandums were submitted to the Centre and State Governments for Dalit Economic Rights.

Together with the Asia Dalit Rights Movement (ADRM), NCDHR helped organise training on 'International Human Rights mechanisms and Advocacy for Dalit Human Rights' in Bangkok in September 2008. NCDHR also organised a visit to India by a high level Dalit delegation from Nepal in September. The main aim was to reinforce Dalits' leadership development, movement and mainstreaming in the constitution-making process in Nepal. The delegation had a series of meetings with Government institutions, Human Rights Commissions, ministries, research institutions, prominent universities, Dalit leaders, media, etc.

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### **National study on torture and impunity in India by People's Watch**

A comprehensive national study, "Torture and Impunity in India", was conducted by People's Watch in ten states in India involving the registration of more than 6000 cases. The study was funded by the European Union and the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung für die Freiheit. The study concluded that police torture is a pervasive and insidious practice occurring throughout India, and that police torture is an entrenched system with strong structural ties to class, caste, communal dynamics and political power. The intersection of these factors adversely impacts the most vulnerable section of the population, the Dalits. The study aimed at preventing and reducing torture in India where police abuses remained an entrenched and often routine law enforcement strategy, despite India's status as the world's largest democracy. This was done with the specific objectives of highlighting individual cases, protecting victims of torture, improving institutional response, and working for new anti-torture legislation and commitment to international treaties. The findings of the report underline the necessity of enhancing the Government's efforts to eliminate these threats to fundamental freedoms, not least by ratifying the UN Convention against Torture. When the final report from the study is published in early 2009, IDSN and People's Watch will jointly submit the report and formulate recommendations to the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture.

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