

Appeal to UN Member States, Special Procedures, and UN Agencies:

TAKE ACTION NOW TO ELIMINATE CASTE DISCRIMINATION

International Dalit Solidarity Network · 2012

GLOBAL CALL FOR ACTION

We, over hundred Dalit activists and social movement leaders from the caste affected countries, Dalit solidarity networks, and international human rights organizations, make an urgent Global Call for Action to citizens of the world to bring an end to millennia of immense human suffering, resulting from a brutal system of caste segregation, affecting over 260 million people worldwide.

We support the words of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights: "Other seemingly insurmountable walls, such as slavery and apartheid, have been dismantled in the past. We can and must tear down the barriers of caste too."

We call for leadership, cooperation and constructive engagement at the local, national, regional and international levels to achieve a caste-free world.

We call for the empowerment of individuals and communities facing caste-based discrimination in decision-making at all levels of governance and in the implementation of policies.

We deplore notions of 'untouchability', pollution and caste hierarchy that cause segregation in villages, schools and places of worship, restrict individuals to the most menial and dangerous jobs, and prevent access to justice for crimes committed against affected communities.

We urge governments, UN experts and civil society to support this Global Call for Action, to respond to the specific appeals in the Joint Declaration, and to act upon the recommendations on Good Practices and Strategies to Eliminate Caste-Based Discrimination.

>>Download the full versions of the Global Call for Action, Declaration, and Recommendations as outcomes of the International Consultation held by IDSN in 2011 here: www.idsn.org/globalcall

General Recommendations to all UN Stakeholders

1. Address caste-related human rights violations in country and thematic reviews, incl. impunity and non-implementation of legislation, violation of Dalit women and children's rights, unequal access to basic services (e.g. education, housing, water, and health) and resources, bonded labour, and torture;
2. Promote the draft UN Principles and Guidelines for the effective elimination of discrimination based on work and descent as a guiding framework to eliminate caste discrimination;
3. Recommend the sharing of good practices to eliminate caste discrimination by governments, Special Procedures, UN agencies and country teams, the private sector, and civil society;
4. Systematically use the recommendations on caste discrimination by UN human rights bodies. For a comprehensive overview (per country and theme), see: www.idsn.org/UNcompilation

Appeal to UN Member States

In the Human Rights Council (HRC), UN Member States are called upon to:

- Address concerns about caste discrimination in relevant political statements, thematic discussions, panel debates, decisions, and resolutions in the HRC;
- Issue a Joint Statement in the HRC calling for leadership, cooperation, and constructive engagement at the local, national, regional and international levels in respond to the Global Call for Action;
- Adopt a resolution on discrimination based on work and descent in the HRC, which:

- Condemns discrimination based on work and descent as a violation of international human rights law, as confirmed by several UN human rights bodies;
- Welcomes the draft UN principles and guidelines for the effective elimination of discrimination based on work and descent, published by the HRC in 2009 (A/HRC/11/CRP.3);
- Invites Member States and their institutions, UN agencies and international institutions, the private sector, and civil society to make use of the draft UN Principles and Guidelines;
- Decides to convene a panel debate in the HRC on this topic, and requests the OHCHR to undertake a global study on the topic as a basis for this discussion;
- Establishes an independent monitoring mechanism to promote and oversee human rights violations against persons affected by discrimination based on work and descent.

In the Universal Periodic Review, UN Member States are specifically encouraged to:

- Address caste-related human rights violations in all reviews of caste-affected countries, based on concerns and recommendations expressed by UN human rights bodies and civil society;
- Give due consideration to impunity and non-implementation of laws to eliminate caste discrimination in the State under Review, while also recognizing the positive steps taken by governments to prevent discrimination against the most vulnerable and marginalized groups.

Appeal to UN Special Procedures

- Systematically address human rights violations intersecting with caste discrimination in studies, country visits, communications, and dialogues with governments, UN agencies, and civil society;
- Take joint action, giving international attention and recognition to the nature and scope of caste discrimination as a chronic and cross-cutting human rights concern;
- Publicly endorse, use, and mainstream the draft UN Principles and Guidelines for the elimination of discrimination based on work and descent as a guiding framework to eliminate caste discrimination;
- Promote the sharing of good practices to eliminate caste discrimination by governments and their institutions, UN agencies, the private sector, civil society, and other relevant actors.

Appeal to UN Agencies

- Develop policy guidance for addressing discrimination based on work and descent within the UN Development Assistance Framework and UN anti-discrimination programming;
- Apply caste sensitive policies and programming measures within individual UN country teams and provide technical and institutional support for the development of anti-discrimination laws, National Action Plans, and access to justice, services and resources for affected communities;
- Facilitate the sharing of good practices to eliminate caste discrimination and promote a dialogue with governments, international organisations, donors, the private sector, and civil society.

UN FRAMEWORK TO ELIMINATE CASTE DISCRIMINATION

The draft UN Principles and Guidelines for the effective elimination of discrimination based on work and descent is a comprehensive legal framework developed to eliminate “discrimination based on work and descent”, the UN terminology for caste discrimination.

Based on existing human rights principles and obligations, the UN Principles and Guidelines constitute a strong tool to encourage anti-discrimination legislation and relevant policy measures to eliminate caste discrimination for governments and their agencies, UN Special Procedures, international agencies, NGOs, educational institutions, and the private sector.

The framework is the outcome of a thematic study by the former UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. It was published by the HRC at its 11 session in 2009 (A/HRC/11/CRP.3). Follow up action by the HRC is needed to promote the UN Principles and Guidelines, as recommended by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and some UN Special Procedure mandate holders. Download here: www.idsn.org/UNPG