

References to IDSN and caste in [ISHR Practical Guide to the UN Committee on NGOs 2015](#)

CHAPTER 4 POLITICAL DYNAMICS, Analysis of State actors, Asian Group

INDIA has generally proven to be a disappointing advocate for civil society organisations, joining Iran and Pakistan in showing hostility towards NGO participation in other UN processes and bodies. India actively blocks organisations working to eliminate caste-based discrimination, including one such application for years (see the case study on **International Dalit Solidarity Network** (IDSN) in Chapter 5). Positively, India generally backs organisations working on sexual and reproductive rights, support that has proved essential in successful negotiations to recommend consultative status for these organisations. It has a mixed record on votes to grant status to LGBTI organisations, either voting in favour or abstaining.

Submit the case to special procedures

Submit your case as an urgent appeal to the UN special procedures, including the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, and the Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders. This can be done by sending information on your case to: urgent-action@ohchr.org. (Link to **IDSN** Submission http://idsn.org/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/Urgent_Appeal/Urgent_Appeal_-_IDSN_-_October_2014.pdf)

SR FoAA 2014 UN General Assembly report on the exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association in the context of multilateral institutions, the Special Rapporteur highlighted the longest-pending application in the Committee – that of the **International Dalit Solidarity Network** (IDSN). **IDSN** is an international NGO focusing on caste-based discrimination and other forms of discrimination based on work and descent. Its application has been deferred for seven years. ‘Since 2008, the Network has received 64 written questions from the Committee, all raised by India.’³⁹ Further, the Special Rapporteur criticised India for arbitrarily blocking **IDSN** from obtaining UN consultative status calling it ‘clearly unacceptable, wrong and unfair’. In the report, the Special Rapporteur also critiqued the functioning of the Committee, underscoring that the Committee is acting, ‘in a manner contrary to the spirit of Resolution 1996/31.’ The Special Rapporteur expressed particular concern that the Committee has in recent years arbitrarily deferred the applications for consultative status of 46 organisations working on human rights issues, such as children and women’s rights, minorities and country situations.

While officially responsible for the neutral enforcement of the criteria specified in Resolution 1996/31, several members of the Committee seek to deny consultative status to those organisations with whom they disagree. This is especially the case for human rights NGOs, including those working on more sensitive issues such as country situations and those working on respect of rights related to sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI), women’s rights, reproductive rights, minority issues, **caste**, and freedom of expression and association. In addition, Committee members can be politically motivated to bring allegations of misconduct against NGOs, although the accusation of misbehaviour is often just the pretext for muzzling an NGO that is outspoken about a member State (see Chapter 4).

NGOs most likely to face challenges include those that criticise certain countries or those that work without their national government’s endorsement. Human rights NGOs specialising in a single country are also likely to be subject to increased scrutiny and delay. In fact, any organisation that contains the term human rights in its name will likely run into objections. NGOs dealing with SOGI, women’s rights, reproductive rights, **caste**, and freedom of expression and association can all expect to face intensive questioning. Institutions working on human rights issues within universities or colleges will also likely be obstructed.