

Forum on Minority Issues
Fourth Session
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Statement for UN Forum on Minority Issues

29 November 2011
Honorable chairperson,
Distinguished Delegates

Thank you for the floor

My name is Anita Bishankha. I am from Nepal and belong to the Dalit community. I work in a National NGO (NNDSWO) based in Kathmandu and represent whole minority women in Nepal.

Madam chair

In Nepal Minority women are facing multiple discriminations on the basis of caste, sex, gender and poverty which are very unique and different from other minority women. They are deprived of a substantial amount of socio-cultural and economic activities.

I would like to highlight an example of the issue of intercaste marriage with Dalits. The right to marriage and choice of spouse is being violated. According to a media study we conducted in 2010-2011 there were 19 items focused on the victimization of couples in intercaste marriage. Very recently on November 16th 2011, in western Nepal, it was reported the house of a Dalit attacked and burnt by the family of the so-called higher caste girl to which his brother had become married. In other cases people have been threatened, attacked, killed and displaced from the society.

Eventhough government has introduced the scheme of providing 100,000 NPR as an incentive for intercaste marriage with Dalits it does not follow the protection or security of the couple and family.

Recently, on 24 May 2011, Legislature Parliament of Nepal endorsed a Caste-based Discrimination and Untouchability (Crime and Punishment) Bill which has outlawed Discrimination and untouchability both in public and private places which is greater achievement. However, the government has no plan and policies for the implementation.

The government has made provision of reservation for minority in government sector however not in private sector.

Madam Chair

Therefore, I strongly recommend for the government of Nepal

- To initiate programmes for the protection and security of couples and integration of the couple in society
- To develop a special mechanism for raising awareness and effective implementation of the new Act.
- To make provision of reservation for minority groups in private sector to maximize the economic opportunities and strongly urge for the reservation within reservation focusing minority women within minority.

Along with this I have made some general comments on Draft Recommendations

1. In regard to the recommendations generally, it mentions women facing discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, nationality, language or religion but Dalit women are that minority women who face discrimination and atrocities on the basis of Caste, an additional basis of discrimination that is not distinguished in this recommendation. This provision must also be included in Recommendation 17, disaggregated data on the basis of caste. Further, there is a need to come up with the special recommendations or measures to address their specific problems and challenges in south Asia.
2. In regard to Recommendation **39**, I strongly recommend including “women from minority groups or nongovernmental organizations working for minorities or led by minorities” instead of “minority women or minority nongovernmental organizations” this applies to all recommendation.

It is very hard to establish democracy and peace in a real sense if minority groups are not included in every sector of the country as a whole, or in the world. Let's respect, protect and recognize the rights of minority women.

Thank you for your kind attention

Thank you MRG and ohchr