

# Caste Extracts from the US State Department 2014 reports on India, Nepal and Pakistan

## US State Department 2014 India Report – Caste Extracts

“The most significant human rights problems were police and security force abuses, including extrajudicial killings, torture, and rape; widespread corruption that contributed to ineffective responses to crime, including those against women and members of scheduled castes or tribes; and societal violence based on gender, religious affiliation, and caste or tribe.” Pg. 1

“Caste-based discrimination continued, as did discrimination against persons with disabilities an indigenous persons; discrimination and violence based on gender identity and sexual orientation as well as persons with HIV/AIDS continued.” Pg. 1

“According to a Dalit rights activist, approximately 20 Dalit families in Ramayapalem, Andhra Pradesh, faced social ostracism by upper-caste village residents in retribution for voting independently during the May general elections. The families were barred from drawing water from a common well in the village, forcing them to walk two and one-half miles and pay another village to obtain safe drinking water. The upper-caste families also refused to supply milk to the 20 Dalit families. As of the end of the year, the Prakasam district policy in Andhra Pradesh had not registered a case against the alleged caste discrimination. Intervention of district authorities did nothing to help the 20 Dalit families.” Pg. 33

“The constitution stipulates that to protect historically marginalized groups and provide for representation in the lower house of parliament, each state must reserve seats for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in proportion to their population in the state. Only candidates belonging to these groups may contest elections in reserved constituencies. In the 2014 elections, 84 seats for candidates from the SCs and 47 seats for those from the STs were reserved, representing 24 percent of the total seats in the lower house. Members of minority populations served as prime minister, vice president, cabinet ministers, Supreme Court justices, and members of parliament.” Pg. 38

“The law prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, gender, disability, language, place of birth, caste, or social status. The government worked with varying degrees of success to enforce these provisions.” Pg. 35

“National crime statistics indicated that, compared with other caste affiliations, rape was most often perpetrated against Dalit women.” Pg. 40

“Caste-based honor killings, particularly among Dalits and Other Backward Classes, increased in southern parts of Tamil Nadu. The Tamil Nadu Police arrested four suspects in a March honor killing. According to police a girl from the Thevar caste in Ramanathapuram married a man from a lower Dalit caste in March 2013 without the permission of her family. In March 2014 she was killed while visiting her parents and buried near the family residence. After her husband filed a petition, her mother confessed to her murder.” Pg. 42

“Government efforts to reduce the fertility rate were occasionally coercive. Health workers and facilities in some areas were paid a fixed amount for each procedure performed and reviewed against quotas for

female sterilizations. In some states health workers were threatened with pay cuts or dismissal for failing to meet quotas. Health workers received a payment of approximately 250 rupees (\$4) for each sterilization patient they delivered to a facility. Women in high-fertility states received 600 rupees (\$9.60) as compensation for undergoing sterilization. Women in low-fertility states received 250 rupees (\$4), unless they were from the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes or were below the poverty line, in which case they received 600 rupees (\$9.60) to be sterilized. Some reports described a “sterilization season,” in which health-care workers pressed to reach quotas for sterilizations before the end of the fiscal year on March 31. Some doctors reportedly withheld health services unless a woman agreed to be sterilized.” Pg. 45

“Some women were pressured to have hysterectomies because of the payment structures for health-care workers and insurance payments for private facilities. This pressure disproportionately affected poor and lower-caste women. In one village, news reports claimed that 90 percent of women had undergone hysterectomies, including many of those well below the age of likely medical necessity.” Pg. 46

“The term “Dalit,” derived from the Sanskrit for “oppressed” or “crushed,” refers to members of what were regarded as the lowest Hindu castes, the SC. Many SC members continued to face impediments to the means of social advancement, including education, jobs, access to justice, freedom of movement, and access to institutions and services. According to the 2011 census, SC members constituted 16.6 percent (approximately 200.9 million persons) of the population. The Ministry of Home Affairs’ 2013-14 annual report noted 33,655 cases of registered crimes against SC members in 2012, compared with 32,719 cases in 2011.

“Although the law protects Dalits, they faced violence and significant discrimination in access to services, such as health care, education, temple attendance, and marriage. Many Dalits were malnourished. Most bonded laborers were Dalits. Dalits who asserted their rights often were attacked, especially in rural areas. As agricultural laborers for higher-caste landowners, Dalits often worked without monetary remuneration. Reports from the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination described systematic abuse of Dalits, including extrajudicial killings and sexual violence against Dalit women. Crimes committed against Dalits often went unpunished, either because authorities failed to prosecute perpetrators or because victims did not report crimes due to fear of retaliation.

NGOs reported widespread discrimination, including prohibiting Dalits from walking on public pathways, wearing footwear, accessing water from public taps in upper-caste neighborhoods, participating in some temple festivals, bathing in public pools, or using certain cremation grounds.

NGOs reported that Dalit students were denied admission to certain schools because of their caste or were required to present caste certification prior to admission. There were reports that school officials barred Dalit children from morning prayers, asked Dalit children to sit in the back of the class, or forced them to clean school toilets while denying them access to the same facilities. There were also reports that teachers refused to correct the homework of Dalit children, refused to provide midday meals to Dalit children, and asked Dalit children to sit separately from children of upper-caste families.

The federal and state governments continued to implement programs for SC members to provide better-quality housing, reserved seats in schools, government jobs, and access to subsidized foods, but critics claimed that many of these programs suffered from poor implementation and/or corruption.

Manual scavenging--the removal of animal or human waste by Dalits--continued in spite of its prohibition under the law. According to 2011 census data, there were more than 11,000 persons in 11 states practicing manual scavenging, the majority from Uttar Pradesh. NGO activists claimed the number was much higher

and that manual scavenging is upheld by the caste system, since a majority of manual scavengers are employed by elected village councils and belong to Other Backward Classes and Dalit populations. The media regularly published articles and pictures of persons cleaning manholes and sewers without protective gear. In December a petition was filed in the Madras High Court in Tamil Nadu against humans entering manholes to remove waste due to the danger of the work.

Human Rights Watch reported that children of manual scavengers faced discrimination, humiliation, and segregation at village schools. Manual scavengers were exposed to infections that affected their skin, eyes, respiratory, and gastrointestinal systems. Health practitioners suggested that children exposed to such bacteria were often unable to maintain a healthy body weight and suffered from stunted growth.

The law prohibits the employment of scavengers or the construction of dry (nonflush) latrines, and penalties range from imprisonment for up to one year, a fine of 2,000 rupees (\$32), or both. Nonetheless, Indian Railways, the country's largest public sector employer, violated the laws without consequences. The state-owned company acknowledged that approximately 30,000 passenger coaches were fitted with open-discharge toilets, "forcing" the railways to employ manual scavengers to clean the tracks. The railways proposed to install sealed toilet systems but without a fixed timeline for implementation.

On April 27, a 17-year-old Dalit boy, Nitin Aghe, was beaten and hanged in Kharda village, Ahmednagar, Maharashtra, for having a romantic relationship with an upper-caste girl. Police arrested the girl's brother and two others, including a minor.

On June 15, neighbors allegedly set a 15-year-old Dalit girl on fire in her home, following a dispute over an overflowing sewage line in the Sayla village in Surendranagar, Gujarat. Police later arrested three men. The girl's family also complained that because the hospital authorities refused to provide treatment, they were forced to take her to a more distant hospital in Ahmedabad.

In July the NHRC ordered appropriate compensation to 16 Dalit families from Boudh, Odisha, for losses suffered after upper-caste villagers looted and set fire to their homes in 2012. The commission characterized the compensation paid to the victims, from 2,500 rupees (\$40) to 15,000 rupees (\$240), as "grossly inadequate" and ordered district officials to use government funds to build new houses for the victims or to rehabilitate damaged houses within eight weeks.

The media alleged that there was discrimination between prisoners of different castes in Tamil Nadu. Dalit prisoners, for example, were not furnished with basic needs, including drinking water, while non-Dalits were provided drinking water and better care in the Salem prison." (Pg. 55-56)

"Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe members lived and worked under traditional arrangements of servitude in many areas of the country. In Arunachal Pradesh, the Nishi tribe traditionally subjugated Sulungs or Puroiks as customary slaves. Although the central government abolished Sulung servitude in 1964, the social group remained impoverished and vulnerable to forced exploitation." (Pg. 64 – 65)

Also see the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at [www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/](http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/).

## [US State Department 2014 Human Rights Report on Nepal](#) - Caste Extracts

“Discrimination against persons with disabilities, lower-caste individuals, and some ethnic groups continued” pg. 1

“No specific laws restrict women, indigenous people, or minorities from voting or participating in government or political parties, but tradition limited the participation of women, some castes, and some ethnic groups in the political process... Women, youth, and minorities complained that party leaders, mostly upper-caste men, prohibited meaningful political participation.” Pg. 19

“The law prohibits discrimination based on race, caste, gender, disability, language, and social status, but the government did not effectively enforce these prohibitions. Despite passage of the Caste Discrimination and Untouchability Act in 2011, a rigid caste system continued to operate throughout the country in many areas of religious, professional, and daily life. Societal discrimination against lower castes, women, and persons with disabilities remained common, especially in rural areas. Human trafficking persisted.” Pg. 22

“Traditional beliefs about witchcraft negatively affected rural women, especially widows, the elderly, persons of low economic status, or members of the Dalit caste.”

“Discrimination against lower castes and some ethnic groups was especially common in the Tarai region and in rural areas. Caste-based discrimination is illegal, and the government outlawed the public shunning of Dalits and made an effort to protect the rights of disadvantaged castes. According to the Nepal National Dalit Social Welfare Organization, government progress in reducing discrimination remained limited in rural areas, and police were reluctant to investigate cases of alleged discrimination. Resistance to intercaste marriage sometimes resulted in ostracism or forced expulsion from the community, according to media reports and NGOs advocating for Dalit rights. Media reports also covered incidents in which Dalits were barred from entering temples and teashops and sharing water sources, and they occasionally suffered violence in such situations, which NGOs said was decreasing but persisted. On May 14, according to media reports, members of an upper-caste family in Butwal Municipality assaulted Sabita Biswakarma, pregnant at the time, while she was filling her pitcher at a public water tap, causing her to lose consciousness.

In urban areas better education and higher levels of prosperity, especially in the Kathmandu Valley, were slowly reducing caste distinctions and increasing opportunities for lower socioeconomic groups. Members of better-educated, urban-oriented castes continued to dominate politics and senior administrative and military positions and control a disproportionate share of natural resources.” Pg. 35-36

“Despite these legal protections, discrimination in employment and occupation occurred with respect to gender, caste, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, and gender identity, as well as with respect to HIV-positive status (see section 6). Such discrimination was most common in the informal sector, where monitoring by the government and human rights organizations was weak or absent, and those in disadvantaged categories had little leverage or recourse. In the formal sector, labor discrimination generally took the form of upper-caste, able-bodied men being favored in hiring and promotions.” (pg. 38)

## [US State Department Human Rights Report on Pakistan - 2014 – Caste Extracts](#)

“Societal discrimination against national, ethnic, and racial minorities persisted, as did discrimination based on caste, sexual orientation, gender identity, and HIV status. Respect for worker rights was minimal.” Pg. 1

“Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons The constitution provides for equality for all citizens and broadly prohibits discrimination based on race, religion, caste, residence, or place of birth. There was, however, significant societal and governmental discrimination based on each of these factors.” Pg. 39

“The use of forced and bonded labor was widespread and common in many industries across the country. NGOs estimated nearly two million persons were in bondage, primarily in Sindh and Punjab, but also in Balochistan and KP. A large proportion of bonded laborers were low-caste Hindus, as well as Christians and Muslims with lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Bonded labor was common in the agricultural sector, including the cotton, sugarcane, and wheat industries, and in the brick, coal, glass, and carpet industries. Bonded laborers often were unable to determine when their debts were fully paid, in part because contracts were rare, and employers were able to take advantage of bonded laborers’ illiteracy to alter debt amounts or the price laborers paid for seed and fertilizer. In some cases landowners restricted laborers’ movements with armed guards or sold laborers to other employers for the price of the laborers’ debts.” Pg. 55