

Outcome Document

#DalitWomenFight against Caste-Based Violence

We; international NGOs, grassroots organizations, United Nations independent human rights experts and human rights activists from around the world; gathered at the 38th Session of the Human Rights Council, on 21st June 2018, during the side event #DalitWomenFight against Caste-Based Violence to examine the ways to address the violence perpetrated against Dalit women in India and throughout South Asia.

Despite the multiple obstacles such as access to resources, repression by public authorities and non-State actors, stigma, discrimination and marginalization, Dalit women worldwide continue their struggle through organization and articulation, nationally, regionally and internationally.

Synthesis of the Discussions

Case studies presented at the event represent samples of a widespread pattern of violence against Dalit women, including sexual and gender-based violence. Gender-based violence occurs in a context of intersectional discrimination, affecting persons both for being women and for being Dalits. Economic factors further aggravate these patterns of violence against Dalit women, as most of the perpetrators belong to dominant castes. Incidences often go unreported or occur with near total impunity, with perpetrators often remaining unpunished.

Several countries which suffer from caste-based discrimination have put policies and legislation in place to tackle this issue. However, challenges remain in enforcement as Dalit women are not informed of their rights and means of redress, and police officers are insensitive or disregard these women completely, discouraging victims from filing complaints. Dalit women and their families are faced with numerous official and unofficial hurdles, sometimes having to choose between their livelihood or the pursuit of justice. In a context of patriarchalism and racism, and coupled with the costs of litigation, impunity is nearly total.

Despite the recognizably serious aims of governments to address the sexual violence that disproportionately affects Dalit women, adequate redress is still inaccessible for many of the victims. Some countries have modified their constitutions and passed legislation adopting harsher penalties for cases of rape, but entrenched impunity persists. Complicity and lenience on the perpetrators create an almost insurmountable institutional bias, so even if an incidence is reported it may go uninvestigated and will rarely reach trial. Police

officers are left unaccountable for negligence in handling cases of violence against Dalit women.

One of the key challenges is to identify how governments can convey a message of an inclusive national identity. The current rise of populism and authoritarianism aggravates patterns of discrimination and violence against Dalit women, undermining mutual understanding and human rights values, reinforcing ideas of superiority, and leading to the increase of physical and psychological violence. Populism and authoritarianism further shrinks civil society space, decreases possibilities of relevant funding, and counters an enabling environment in which the free exchange of ideas and equality be mutually reinforcing.

Greater synergies between international, national and grassroots movements are vital, including finding new ways to move forward together by combining national and international efforts. The Dalit women's movement will continue to find opportunities to engage with the UN to have their voices heard and advocate for their cause. The resolution to this widespread violence requires immediate action.

The Way Forward

The panelists, co-sponsors and supporting organizations, propose the following;

United Nations Mechanisms

While recognizing the positive engagement between our movements and the UN human rights mechanisms, we urge the United Nations to step up their efforts to ensure the participation of Dalit movements and monitor breaches of Dalit women's rights. We call for treaty bodies to build upon the knowledge of intersectionality and strengthen early warning procedures to protect Dalit women from violence. We further encourage the special procedures to strengthen the use of letters of allegation and urgent appeals.

United Nations Member States

We commend the UN Member States which have already engaged with Dalit and Dalit women's movements worldwide and encourage other UN Member States to engage in order to redress instances of institutional discrimination. We strongly recommend UN Member States to strengthen their law, policies and practices, in accordance with the recommendations of the relevant UN human rights bodies and mechanisms, including the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

Non-Governmental Organizations and Other Social Movements

We praise the solidarity already extended by several non-governmental organizations and social movements to Dalit and Dalit women's organizations worldwide and reiterate our

willingness to continue the collaboration with those organizations and movements. We strive for an increased number of Dalit women defenders participating in the international human rights mechanisms and fora and ask partner organizations and movements to continue their solidarity efforts to protect Dalit and Dalit women's movements from interference in this participation.

Organizers: Human Rights Watch (HRW), the International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR), Minority Rights Group International (MRG), Anti-Slavery International, FORUM-ASIA and Franciscans International (FI) and supported by The National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights and the International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN).