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## **Rapes of Dalit women and impunity for dominant caste perpetrators must end now**

**IDSN Statement** - IDSN strongly condemns the rapes and murders of Dalit girls and women in South Asia. The recent case of gang rape and murder of a 19-year old Dalit woman in Hathras, Uttar Pradesh, has highlighted the ongoing brutality against Dalit women and the impunity with which it is administered. We stand in solidarity with Dalit women, their families and human rights defenders taking action on the ground to ensure that justice is served.

Caste-based rapes of Dalit girls and women take place daily in South Asia and in this past month several horrific cases of rape of Dalit women and girls by dominant caste men in India and Nepal have made headlines and sparked outrage. Human rights defenders are mobilising to push for action and implementation of legislation in their countries and our solidarity and support is crucial at this moment in time.

Media and fact finding teams have highlighted that several Dalit girls as young as 12 have been raped and murdered in Nepal and India by dominant caste men. Their families are fighting for justice with the odds stacked against them. The cases reported are just the tip of the iceberg of caste rapes and atrocities inflicted on Dalits every week, year after year.

“The failure to ensure access to justice for Dalits in India and Nepal and take solid action to end caste-based discrimination is fuelling the most brutal and horrific crimes, with little or no consequence for the dominant caste perpetrators,” says IDSN Director Meena Varma. “This cycle of injustice and suffering can and must be stopped.”

In the case of the 19-year old Dalit woman in Hathras, the police were caught on video burning the woman’s dead body against the families wishes, thereby destroying evidence.

In India, the recently released Government National Crimes Records Bureau (NCRB) data for 2019 shows that ten Dalit women are raped every day across the country, and these officially recorded cases are only a small percent of the cases, as most cases are not registered due to intimidation, discrimination, threats and the failure of systems of justice.

The International Dalit Solidarity Network’s members on the ground are working tirelessly to push for justice and change. IDSN has signed on to joint letters on individual cases and is pushing for action from United Nations and European Union stakeholders to stand in solidarity with Dalit human rights defenders fighting for justice.

“We must seize this moment to move away from talking about laws on paper and demand accountability for the implementation of those laws on the ground.” said Ms. Varma.

“Caste discrimination has for far too long been allowed to reign in South Asia to the detriment of societies. We must all stand in solidarity with Dalits fighting for rights, fighting for justice, and together push for ending caste discrimination now.”

**More information:**

[Compilation of key media headlines on September India and Nepal rape and murder cases](#)

[Read the IDSN publication on Caste and Gender Justice: Delivering on the UN Global Goals for Dalit women and girls](#)

Stay updated on the latest developments on the IDSN twitter account [@idsnupdates](#) and find more information on [www.idsn.org](#)

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**Background:**

**The International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN)** was founded in March 2000 to advocate for Dalit human rights and to raise awareness of Dalit issues nationally and internationally. IDSN is a network of international human rights groups, development agencies, national Dalit solidarity networks from Europe and organisations in caste-affected countries. IDSN engages with the United Nations, the European Union and other multilateral institutions, working for action-oriented approaches to address ‘untouchability’ and other human rights abuses against Dalits and similar communities that suffer discrimination based on work and descent. IDSN bases its work on contributions from members, associates and affiliates. The network produces crucial input in the form of documentation, strategic interventions and lobby action and also supports national level lobbying.

**Caste Discrimination:**

There are an estimated 260 million Dalits worldwide, often born into an ‘untouchable’ status, in highly stratified caste systems. Caste systems are found in South Asia, in communities migrated from South Asia across the globe and in other caste-stratified countries in Africa and Asia. Caste-based discrimination involves massive violations of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

Caste systems divide people into unequal and hierarchical social groups. Those at the bottom are considered inferior, ‘impure’ and ‘polluting’ to other caste groups. Those in the lowest of castes, known as Dalits in South Asia, are often considered ‘untouchable’ and subjected to so-called ‘untouchability practices’ in both public and private spheres. Dalits may be forced to do the most dirty and hazardous jobs, and subjected to modern slavery.

Due to exclusionary practices, Dalits have limited access to resources, services and development, keeping many in severe poverty. Dalits are often de facto excluded from decision-making and meaningful participation in public and civil life.

Dalits suffer from caste-based violence and atrocities including rape and other forms of sexual violence, arson, destruction of property and restriction of movement and freedom.

Lack of special legislation banning caste-based discrimination or lack of implementation of legislation, due to dysfunctional systems of justice, lack of state responsibility and caste-bias, have largely left Dalits without protection.

Despite policy developments and new legislation in some countries, fundamental challenges still remain in all caste-affected countries.