

Statement by Chander Kohli at the UN Forum on Minority Issues 2023

Hindus are the largest minority in Pakistan followed by the Christians and then Sikhs. But within that Hindu community the majority is of Dalits who constitute 85% of the Hindu minority but are yet neglected and live a life with misery, they are also known as Scheduled Castes or Dalits. Human Rights violations are a major challenge that Hindu Minority/ Dalits face in Pakistan.

Dalits in Sindh usually part of the agriculture workforce or work as laborers at the hands of other landlords due to low literacy rates in the community. Dalits are used as Bonded Laborers and are limited in their houses along with their families and children by their landowners, who write huge amount as loans on them and do not allow them to migrate for a better living. They live under extreme poverty and are not able to educate their children which is a huge loss of generation and development of the country.

Generally the cases of killings of Dalits are regularly reported. However, in several cases, the loved ones of the victims were not allowed to file a complaint with the police on behalf of the deceased. Cases of abduction of Minor Dalit girls have been also reported on a regular basis. Even with proof of them being underage, they are declared to be above the legal age to marry, which is a major injury of mind for Dalit communities. Despite the human rights violations they face, and due to low literacy rates, they have limited knowledge of what legal options they can pursue for justice.

In addition, the political representation of Dalits in the provincial of national assemblies is also very low as most of the allotted seats of Dalits are occupied by upper caste Hindu in exchange of money with the political parties.

Dalits are easily targeted by other citizens, due to weak economic conditions and low literacy rate. Unfortunately, there are few organizations working for the rights of Dalits in the country or religious minorities which makes their lives vulnerable.

I ask the international community to come forward, join hands for the empowerment of Dalits so that they equally contribute to the development of the world and make a peaceful society.