

UN Forum on Minority Issues – November 2024

Statement by Hariharan Karuppusamy International Dalit Solidarity Network.

Session 3 Minority Representation in the media, including social media

Thank you Madam Chair.

I am Hari Haran Karuppusamy, addressing you on behalf of the International Dalit Solidarity Network.

The world continues to evolve from the physical to the virtual. In India, 40% of the population is active on a social media market that is dominated by major platforms. However, these platforms propagate hate speech. Online hate speech includes discrimination and incitements of violence against individuals or specific groups based on their caste. Therefore, these platforms are used to humiliate and harass Dalits, subjecting them to bullying and direct verbal abuse through slurs, insults, and threats.

I strongly recommend that all governments and businesses recognize caste-based hate speech as a specific form of hate speech. Whilst some major technology platforms have policies that prohibit hate speech, including hate speech on caste, there is a significant lack of implementation. To achieve affective implementation, technology companies must invest in culturally informed AI and expand their teams of local and affected experts.

The misrepresentation of Dalits online results in an increase in the violence and sexual violence committed on Dalit women and girls. Dalit women face online threats of rape and violence that aim to degrade their dignity. I want to highlight the good practice demonstrated by READ NGO, who empower Dalit women through educating them on their rights on sexual harassment in the workplace.

Caste-based hate speech is a human rights issue that creates very real abuses. This must be collectively acknowledged to build a world where all individuals can define their own identities and live free from fear, discrimination, and prejudice.