



International Dalit Solidarity Network

WORKING GLOBALLY AGAINST DISCRIMINATION BASED ON WORK AND DESCENT

Media Release

European Parliament: India must get rid of caste discrimination

December 19, 2006: A resolution was adopted today by the Committee on Development of the European Parliament urging the Government of India to stop the violence against Dalits (formerly called 'Untouchables') and the widespread practices of untouchability. The Committee expressed its concern about the recurring refusal by the police to register and pursue cases of crimes committed against Dalits and the dismally low number of convictions of perpetrators for crimes against Dalits.

"The result is a vicious cycle of continued violence and denial of constitutional rights for Dalits", says Paul Divakar from the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights – India at a public hearing in the Committee on the situation of Dalits in India held on 18th of December. Responding to the evidence presented by Paul Divakar and Ruth Manorama of the National Federation of Dalit Women, members of various political parties expressed their dismay about the shocking lack of implementation of laws supposed to protect the human rights of Dalits.

Chair of the Committee, Louisa Morgantini of the Socialist group reacted to the testimonies by Divakar and Manorama saying that caste discrimination in India is a well kept secret. Max van den Berg, Vice Chair of the Committee and also of the Socialist group, said that thus far the EU has not been able to address this serious issue openly. He felt that the issue cannot be tackled without much more public knowledge and pressure.

Jurgen Schroder of the European People's Party asked how India can be called a democracy, when caste discrimination is perpetuated on this scale. He also wondered why the media are not giving more attention to the issue. Margrete Auken of the Greens, rapporteur of the resolution, added that criticism has never hurt a democracy and called for an open dialogue with India on the issue.

Following the hearing a resolution was adopted by the Development Committee by consensus. The resolution calls on the European Commission and the European Council to:

- ❖ Raise the issue of caste discrimination during EU-India Summits and in other dialogues between EU and India, including on human rights and trade
- ❖ Include specific measures in EU development cooperation with India in order to close the wide gap between Dalits and the rest of the population regarding the attainment of the Millenium Development Goals
- ❖ Give priority to the promotion of equal opportunities for Dalits in private EU based companies and encourage companies to implement the Ambedkar Principles against caste discrimination in employment

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