



February 13, 2007

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh
7, Race Course Road
New Delhi
India

Re: India's submission to the Committee reviewing India's compliance with the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

Dear Prime Minister Singh:

Enclosed is a copy of *Hidden Apartheid: Caste Discrimination against India's "Untouchables,"* a report produced by the Center for Human Rights and Global Justice and Human Rights Watch. It is a shadow report in response to India's recent submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (the Committee) which monitors implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (the Convention).

The Committee will review India's compliance with the Convention during hearings in Geneva on February 23 and February 26, 2007.

Despite your recent strong and welcome condemnation of the plight of Dalits in India, official actions to address caste-based discrimination and violence have been wholly inadequate. For example, a 2005 government report found that a crime is committed against a Dalit every 20 minutes. This failure is also exemplified by India's recent submission to the Committee, which does not contain any reference to caste-based abuses in India. This omission contradicts the Committee's 1996 determination that caste falls within the Convention's prohibition on descent-based discrimination. A lack of reporting on this pervasive problem, along with a lack of attention to the limited impact of laws in place to address caste-discrimination, are two key gaps that need to be addressed with urgency by the government to ensure that it is in compliance with its international human rights obligations.

We believe that unless this issue is taken up with strong leadership at the highest levels of government, the more than 165 million Dalits in India will remain condemned to a lifetime of abuse simply because of the caste into which they are born. We hope that you will take up the matter urgently. Specifically, we urge your government to:

- Take steps to ensure appropriate reforms to eliminate police abuses against Dalits and other marginalized communities.
- Provide concrete plans to implement laws and government policies to secure the protection of Dalits, and of Dalit women in particular, from physical and sexual violence.

- Take steps to eradicate caste-based segregation in residential areas and schools, and in access to public services.
- Outline plans to ensure the effective eradication of exploitative labor arrangements and effective implementation of rehabilitation schemes for Dalit bonded and child laborers, manual scavengers, and for Dalit women forced into prostitution.
- Ensure proper implementation and monitoring of Dalit development programs which have largely failed to reach target groups.
- Combat hate speech and other actions inciting caste or religion based discrimination and violence.
- Implement the recommendations of the 2004 National Human Rights Commission report on atrocities against Dalits.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to learning what steps you have taken to address these important issues.

Yours truly,



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