

## **Rising atrocities against Dalits in India press release**

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We, the Anti Caste Discrimination Alliance, Asian Rationalists, AWAAZ South Asia Network, Bhagwan Valmik Mandirs (Bedford, Birmingham, Coventry, Oxford, Southall, Wolverhampton), Dr Ambedkar Buddhist organisation Birmingham UK, Federation of Ambedkarite and Buddhist Organisations UK, IndiaMattersUK, India Workers Association GB, Indian Scheduled Caste Welfare Association UK, Sri Guru Ravidass Sabha (Bedford, Derby), Shri Guru Ravidass Cultural Association Darlaston, The Monitoring Group, strongly condemn the increasing violence against Dalits and minorities in India.

We also condemn the rise in the so-called ‘cow vigilantism’ in a country paradoxically the top exporter of beef in the world<sup>1</sup>, the rise in ‘Hindu nationalism’ and the failure of the authorities to provide legal justice and redress to victims and to eradicate Caste-based discrimination. We stand in solidarity with protests in Una, Gujarat and around the world including the UK and the USA against these rising atrocities.

Today we have submitted a Joint Statement to the UK Government asking them to call on the Government of India to take stern action against the perpetrators and prosecute government and police officials responsible for aiding and abetting these criminals, and to implement the laws that outlaw Untouchability and the laws aimed at helping uplift Dalits and Scheduled Tribes.

We have also submitted a Joint Statement to the United Nations High Commissioner (UN HC) for Human Rights and UN Secretary General, asking them to intervene and send a team immediately to investigate the situation on the ground in Una, Gujarat and look into Caste-based discrimination in India. Both Navi Pillay<sup>2</sup> the previous UN HC, and the current HC, Zeid Ra’ad al Hussein have both highlighted the need to tackle Caste-based inequality<sup>3</sup>.

Our specific calls to the Government of India are that they must:

- i. Take swift and robust action against the dominant caste perpetrators violating the human rights of Dalits and minorities
- ii. Conduct an open and transparent investigation under the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Act, 2015 and prosecute those Government and police officials who are found to have aided and abetted criminals
- iii. Robustly implement the Special Courts and Exclusive Special Courts mandated in the SC ST Act, 2015 for speedy trials
- iv. Take swift action to deal with the unacceptable shortage of judges that is impacting negatively on access to justice <sup>4</sup>
- v. Fully implement the Scheduled Castes Sub Plan (SCSP) and the Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) and

discharge the allocation of funds due to Dalits for their upliftment. Ensure there is full transparency and accountability in the expenditure of the funds that is not only focused on 'survival' schemes like food, hostels etc, but also allocated for skill development for modern jobs that will help the social and economic mobility of Dalits and Scheduled Tribes.

Notes to Editors: More background information on next page.

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1 <http://beef2live.com/story-world-beef-exports-ranking-count...>

2 <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx...>

3 [http://www2.ohchr.org/.../OHC.../allegati/1\\_Foreword\\_HC\\_2015.pdf](http://www2.ohchr.org/.../OHC.../allegati/1_Foreword_HC_2015.pdf)

4 <http://indianexpress.com/.../judges-shortage-pending-cases-i.../>

## Background

On 11 July, four Dalit men were partly stripped, tied to a car and subjected to what was nothing short of a public flogging captured on film by cow vigilantes for skinning a dead cow in Una, Gujarat. This raised memories of historical accounts of public floggings of Black slaves in America. In Gujarat and other states in India, the Dalit community involved in traditional jobs are now being targeted by the dominant caste groups under the guise of cow protection and Hindu nationalism. Caste apartheid and economic factors already force Dalits into descent-based occupations that include cleaning of the dead animal carcasses, tanning of leather, bonded labour and manual scavenging. When Dalits assert their human rights to an education or to better jobs, the dominant caste groups are finding new ways to terrorize them including public floggings, harassing families, rape and punishment rape, stripping Dalit women and parading them naked in the streets, and social exclusion in villages<sup>5</sup>. PhD student Rohit Vemula's suicide in Hyderabad this January is but one of most prominent of many examples.

The Government promises of uplifting the Dalits and Scheduled Castes by way of a legally mandated Scheduled Castes Sub Plan (SCSP) and the Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) funds are failing. According to the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR), only a third of the already truncated funds are allocated to Dalits and SCs - 'Two thirds are non-targeted and notional allocations 'retro-budgeting' i.e. funds spent on some scheme that covers the whole population and then claims are made that that it must have benefited dalits and adivasis too.'<sup>6</sup> The RSS and Hindutva extremists have free reign under successive Governments but visibly more so under the current Indian Government, threatening secularism in India and promoting an unhealthy form of nationalism. The fundamental right to choose one's faith, what one eats or wears, who one marries and the freedom of speech are rapidly being eroded. The Nobel Laureate Professor Amartya Sen at this June's Federation of Ambedkarite and Buddhist Organisations UK's Conference summed up the political environment in India. He said "one issue that keeps coming up in India is people being branded as anti-national for not toeing a particular line" "I would say Caste is anti-national because it 'divides the nation.'<sup>7</sup> There is clear evidence that atrocities against Dalits continue to increase. According to India's National Crime Records Bureau, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan have reported the highest rates against Scheduled Castes show an almost 40% increase of crime against Dalits all over India between 2011 and 2014.<sup>8</sup> In 2015, Gujarat reported the highest crime rate against Dalits up a staggering 163.3% (6,655 cases) followed by Chhattisgarh at 91.9% (3,008 cases). UP reported the most number of cases of crime against Dalits at 8,946. Sexual assaults against women and rape are top crimes against scheduled castes. It's a form of control society that is honour-based. These crime figures are just the tip of the iceberg. Many crimes are not reported. Many that are reported to the authorities are not processed by officials and the police. As a result they do not feature in the official records. We will continue to monitor such atrocities and demand justice for the victims of Caste oppression.

5 <http://indianexpress.com/.../dalit-violence-gujarat-gau-raks.../>

6 <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/.../articles.../46376059.cms...>

7 <http://indianexpress.com/.../amartya-sen-indian-caste-system.../>

8 <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/.../articles.../53329482.cms>

[Courtesy: Anand Patwardhan]