

FORUM ON MINORITY ISSUES

Protecting minority rights during humanitarian crises

Provisional Agenda Item V: Recovering from a crisis: ensuring durable solutions for minorities (November 25, 2016)

Time 3-6pm

Oral Statement Presented by: Pirbhu Lal Satyani, Member of National Lobbying Delegation on minorities and Pakistan Dalit Solidarity Network.

Thank you Mr. Chairperson.

My name is **Pirbhu Lal Satyani**. I am minority fellow in OHCHR 2016 and belong to Hindu Religious Minority in Pakistan.

In Pakistan religious minorities' particularly Hindu scheduled caste (known as Dalits) are more vulnerable to both natural and man-made disasters. In particular, Hindu Dalits live in highly vulnerable places that are prone to all kinds of disasters, such as rural areas without proper housing facilities.

Hundreds of thousands of Dalits were affected by the floods in Pakistan in 2010 and 2011, and many of them were denied access to relief camps, as well as other forms of discrimination when seeking assistance. It was noted that caste discrimination is severely inhibiting Dalits' access to relief aid. Dalits are turned away from relief camps and have to live and sleep in the open air. Food, water and blankets are also diverted so that they do not reach the Dalits.

Mr. Chairperson, to avoid the recurrence of the situation I described above we call to the Government of Pakistan and International humanitarians actors

- To consider and include Dalits and minorities as vulnerable groups in the Pakistan National Policy Guideline on vulnerable groups in Disasters.
- To reach out to the vulnerable Dalit communities in disasters through Dalit and minority representatives, volunteers and local NGOs. They should also be involved in preparedness activities and response plans.
- It is positive note that The Government of Sindh, Pakistan has taken key action and passed two important pending laws this week – **One**- MINORITY RIGHTS COMMISSION BILL 2015; and **second** - THE CRIMINAL LAW (PROTECTION OF MINORITIES) BILL, 2016. We appreciate Government of Sindh and Pakistan for these positive actions but demand same legislation in other provinces in Pakistan and ensure that selection of the Minority Rights Commission members should be impartial, fair and after consultation with civil society organizations.

Mr. Chairperson, despite all the challenges and issues we face, our struggle will continue so as to protect and promote the rights of religious minorities and Dalits who are more vulnerable in all crises whether it is humanitarian, social or religious.

I thank you for this time.