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AMBEDKAR CENTER FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE

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STATEMENT MADE IN 11TH SESSION OF MINORITY FORUM 2018 BY AMBEDKAR CENTER FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE

Chairperson, distinguished Government delegates and NGO friends,

My name is Yogesh Varhade,President of Ambedkar Center for Justice and Peace and I belong to scheduled caste who are also known as untouchables.

I am speaking on behalf of our millions of scheduled caste people in India and in Bangladesh.

This is a tragic story of the genocide committed by the Communist West Bengal Government of Chief Minister Jyoti Basu in 1979 who tried to cover-up the genocide during their regime.

1. Namshudras are the original inhabitants of Bengal State.
When India was divided in 1947,thousands of Namshudras from East Pakistan(now Bangla Desh) came to India and refused to go back to Bangladesh who later were directed to Dandakaranya, Sunderban forest area to settle in Marichjhapi. Most of them were artisans, laborers and agriculturists.
2. The left-front Govt. in West Bengal that had come to power with refugee votes now urged them to go back to Dandakaranya forest area and refused to settle them in any other part in West Bengal. They were sent forcibly and about 10000 Namshudra families were sent to relocate at Marichjhapi.
3. Later same government declared Marichjhapi as a reserved forest and the refugees as violating the Forest Act, destroying "the existing and potential forest wealth and also creating ecological imbalance."
4. Then on 26 Jan,1979,Jyoti Basu the, Chief Minister announced economic blockade of Marichjhapi. 30 police launches were sent surrounding the island and refugees were teargased. Their huts, fisheries and tube wells were destroyed. Those who tried to run away were shot at. The refugees had no arms to defend themselves and their bodies were thrown in to RAIMANGAL RIVER. The Marichjhapi became out of bound for media and even to parliamentary committee who came to investigate the police atrocities.
5. Thus silence surrounding massacre continued for decades.
The violence was more than the annihilation of the people who the state had disowned.
6. There is an urgent need for full investigation of this major forgotten genocide.
7. We demand full investigation by United Nations of this great tragedy committed by west Bengal Government and people who were responsible for this genocide should be tried in the international court as criminals who committed crimes against humanity.