

Human Rights Council
Forum on Minority Issue
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13th Session of the Forum on the Minority Issues

Intervention – 2nd item of the agenda: “Causes, Scale, and Impact of Hate Speech targeting Minorities on Social Media.”

Statement presented by: Rup Sunar, Nepal- Dignity Initiative, OHCHR 2013 Minority Fellow

Madam Chairperson
Distinguished delegates and colleagues

My name is Rup Sunar. I belong to Dalit community and here represent Dignity Initiative, a Kathmandu based NGO working on promoting Dalit rights through knowledge production, academic activism and policy interventions.

As you are all aware of the fact that the digital world has opened up new avenues for marginalized communities to voice their concerns and express dissents. In that sense, social media proved to be a game changer for Dalit’s inclusion in the mainstream discourse. On the flip side, this has also made Dalits more vulnerable to hate speech and its consequences.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some of the main challenges faced by Dalits in hate speech in social media:

- There is a growing increment of verbal abuse or attacks targeting Dalit community in social media. The casteist and derogatory remarks have become common.
- During the pandemic and beyond, caste violence and atrocities continue to occur at an alarming rate. Several YouTubers produced video reports, often distorting the facts and creating confusion and thereby misleading the public.
- The erosion of privacy in Nepalese society has become a matter of great concerns. No one seems to care about the privacy of others. This further victimizes the victims and possesses serious threat to their access to justice.

Based on these challenges, I would like to make the following recommendations for the protection of human rights of Dalits in the cyber space:

- Establish and implement appropriate legal, institutional and policy frameworks to protect Dalit’s human rights in the cyber space, without curbing their fundamental human rights.
- The provision of seeking consent prior to the publication of personal data must be implemented. The right to privacy must be respected.

- The government must apply appropriate measures so that new media users abide by ethical standards of journalism to prevent disinformation.

Thank you.