

## **Statement by Dignity Initiative, Nepal for Minority Forum**

Delivered by: Rup Sunar, Executive Head, Dignity Initiative, and Nepal entitled "Caste-based discrimination against Dalits in Nepal."

My name is Rup Sunar, and I am the executive head of the Dignity Initiative, Nepal. Today, I will speak on caste based discrimination against the Dalits in Nepal.

Let me begin by a brief overview of the organization that I represent. Dignity Initiative is a Kathmandu based organization, working on issues of social exclusion and human rights. It further focuses on knowledge production, activism and policy intervention on the key issues related to Dalits. I am submitting this statement on behalf of the Dalit CSOs.

There are constitutional provisions and legislative measures that outlaw caste-based discriminations both in the private and public spheres. The article 24 of the Constitution of Nepal has explicitly prohibited any kinds of discrimination on the basis of caste. Similarly, the Caste-based Discrimination and Untouchability (Offense and Punishment) Act 2011 has the provision of punishment to those who practice caste-based discrimination. In addition, Nepal is a party to seven core International Human Rights Treaties along with other instruments. Despite these policy measures, Dalits continue to suffer from structural exploitation, discriminatory state behavior and exclusion.

Let me share you an incident took place very recently on the caste- based discrimination. Ms. Rupa Sunar, who belongs to Dalit community, was denied to rent a room by upper caste Saraswati Pradhan. Rupa filed a case and police arrested Ms. Pradhan and investigation was going on by taking her into custody. Surprisingly, the then sitting education minister Krishna Gopal Shrestha forced the police to release the alleged person and dropped her home in his official vehicle. While the state should be defending the case, the intervention from the Minister has violated Dalit's rights to equality and dignified life. Neither the state nor his party has taken any action against the perpetrators yet.

More than 3 dozens of Dalits have been killed since the implementation of the Caste-based Discrimination and Untouchability Act. Unfortunately, the majority of the perpetrators still go unpunished. Last year, a massacre took place in Rukum, where Navaraj BK, a 21-year-old boy and his five other friends from Jajarkot, were mercilessly beaten up, killed and then thrown into the nearby river. The family and the member of the victims are still waiting for justice.

**Therefore, we would like to urge the international community:**

- To recommend the government of Nepal to take necessary action against the state authorities involved in releasing the accused the person in the detention centers
- To recommend the government to continue the effective and timely investigation on the cases lodged against the caste-based discriminations
- To ask the government to reform the laws concerning to the criminal justice system in Nepal
- Finally, given the nature of this case as a gross violation of human rights, we would strongly like to urge the government to make the alleged responsible to gather and produce the evidence/proof.

Thank you.