

Oral Statement – 16th session of UN Forum on Minority Issues

Session 3 – Legal and Structural Approaches to More Inclusive Societies

Thank you, I am speaking on today's theme in the context of India. A key institution that provides a Legal way to inclusion is the Justice system of the land. But if misused it can also become the cause for great exclusion for societies.

It is with dismay that we state that the Indian Legal system has become a challenge for Inclusive societies. It has presided over many serious matters: often at odds with it's constitution: like (1) Laws that grant citizenship based on religion, (2) Anti-Conversion laws: that prevent freedom to practice religion of one's choice, (3) Law's against slaughter of particular animals like the Cow: purely based on selective religious preferences, (4) and Sedition Laws that allows arrest of anyone seen as a threat to the political establishment.

In 1991 a 400 year old Historic Mosque called "Babri Masjid" was demolished by Hindutva Mobs. 30 years later in 2019 the Supreme Court of India acquitted all accused & permitted construction of a Hindu temple over it's rubble. Today, this has went on to enable Hindutva forces to raise similar claims over several other mosques across India.

Muslim's consume meat that is prepared according to their religious practice, commonly known to the world as "Halaal meat" which in Arabic simply means "Permissible meat". This is similar to the Jews having the label "kosher" for the food they consume, or the label of Vegan for Hindus. Few weeks back India's Largest state Uttar Pradesh with 40 million Muslim population has banned all meat that has the label "Halal". These exclusionary laws are not characteristics of global leadership and not helpful for a country that aspires to earn a seat on UN Security Council.

We seek intervention of the Council to appoint Special Rapporteur or establish an independent commission to monitor and report on human rights violations in India and we call upon the Indian government to ensure a fair Legal system to be inclusive to all.