

Statement for the 16th Session of the Forum on Minority Issues in Geneva, 2023

Honorable Chairperson
Excellences,
Independent Expert on Minority Issues
Distinguished Delegates

I would like to thank you very much for granting me the opportunity to speak on behalf of Dalits and other Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (CDWD).

My name is Bhakta Bishwakarma and I am representing the Asia Dalit Rights Forum (ADRF) as General Secretary. ADRF works for the more than 270 million Dalits and communities discriminated based on work and descent worldwide. These communities include the Dalits in South Asia, the Haratin in Africa, the Roma in Europe, the Quilombola in Brazil, and the Burakumin in Japan. These communities face an un-ending struggle for human rights, equity, justice, and dignity.

Dalit and other CDWD face severe discrimination, marginalization, and social exclusion, resulting in a lack of participation in socio-economic and political opportunities, and access to justice. CDWD experience grave human rights violations including killings, displacement, intimidation, and harassment, undermining their fundamental human rights. In Nepal, Ajit Mijar's dead body has been laying in a hospital waiting for justice since 2020. A significant number live in bonded labor or slavery and are faced with landlessness, hunger, extreme poverty, and malnutrition. These communities have been left behind in every respect. The United Nations and the international community must act decisively to right the historic wrongs committed against CDWD, recognizing the gravity of the situation and working towards a future where they are able to exercise their fundamental rights and live in freedom and dignity.

I would like to make the following key recommendations:

1. I strongly urge the Human Rights Council to consider adopting the Draft Resolution on the Rights of Communities Discriminated based on Work and Descent.
2. Further, the HRC needs to adopt the UN Principles and Guidelines for the Effective Elimination of Discrimination Based on Work and Descent that have been pending since 2009.
3. Countries affected by Discrimination based on Work and Descent are strongly encouraged to criminalize these pervasive forms of discrimination if they have not yet done so and should adopt effective measures to ensure the socio-economic and political participation of these communities on an equal footing. Existing policies and legislation in place to prevent such discrimination must be effectively enforced.
4. States must ensure effective remedy by taking appropriate steps to ensure effective judicial and non-judicial grievance mechanisms.
5. States should invest in research, evidence collection, and Gender Equality and Social Inclusion disaggregated data on discrimination based on work and descent for effective policy and strategy formulations, and report periodically to UN mechanisms.

Thank you.

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