

International Dalit Solidarity Network

Thank you Madame Speaker. Good afternoon.

My name is [inaudible] I am a law practitioner from [inaudible], Pakistan. Hindus are the largest minority in Pakistan, followed by Christians, and then Sikhs. But within the Hindu community, the majority are Dalits who constitute more than 85% of the total population of Hindus. But they are left neglected and live a life at misery. They are also known as the “untouchable” caste. Human rights violations are a major challenge that Hindu minority or Dalits face in Pakistan. Dalits [inaudible] are usually part of the agricultural work force or work as labourers at the hands of other landlords due to low literacy rate in the community. Dalits are used as [inaudible] labourers and are limited in their houses along with their families and children by their land owners who write huge amount of loans on them and do not free them to migrate for a better living. They live under extreme poverty and are not able to educate their children which is a huge loss of generation and development of the country. Cases of extrajudicial killing are regularly reported, however, in several cases the loved ones of the victims were not allowed to file a complaint with the police on behalf of the deceased. Cases of the abduction of minor Dalit girls have also been reported on regular basis. Even with proof of them being underage, they are declared to be of the legal age to marry. Which is a major injury of [inaudible] of Dalit communities in Pakistan. Despite the human rights violations they face and due to low literacy rate, they have limited knowledge of [inaudible] legal options they can pursue for justice in Pakistan. In addition, Dalits also lack political representation in the national and provincial assemblies in Pakistan. A lot of [inaudible] for Dalits are finally occupied by upper-caste Hindu communities in exchange of money with the political parties, further excluding the Dalit population. Unfortunately, there are few organizations working for Dalit rights in Pakistan, which makes their lives further vulnerable. I ask the international community to come forward, join hands, for the empowerment of Dalits in Pakistan, so they can equally contribute and play a role for better living in Pakistan.