

Honorable Senators/Congressmen:

Re: Pervasive Dalit Atrocities, Human Rights Violation, Injustice, and Discrimination in India and South Asia

On behalf of the more than 260 million Dalits (untouchables of South Asia) who live in India, Nepal, Pakistan, the UK, USA, and throughout the world, I plead to the representatives of the United States—leaders on human rights issues and pioneers in protecting suffering humans—to call on the leaders of India and ask them why pervasive human rights violations persist. As a United States representative, I hope you feel the moral responsibility to protect the innocent and persecuted Dalits. I am confident the U.S. government can do a lot to change the Indian administration and hope to see an investigation into the gross violation of human rights. Dalits in India seek justice from the Indian government under your tutelage.

Dr. Ambedkar—father of the Indian constitution, graduate of Columbia University, Oxford-educated scholar, and the first law minister of India after its independence—was from a Dalit community and so created constitutional rights for these poor people. This Indian constitution guarantees equality, liberty, fraternity, and social justice; however, the subsequent state and federal governments have utterly failed to protect Dalits by not following the constitutional codes. The practice of untouchability is a criminal offense, as per the 1989 Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and the 1995 Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Rules (Prevention of Atrocities). The Bonded Labor (System Abolition) Act of 1976 declares maintaining bonded laborers a serious criminal offense, and the Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act of 1986—along with the October 2006 amended Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act of 1986—makes it a criminal offense to employ children below 14 years of age. India is also a signatory to six United Nations fundamental rights conventions, including the following:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965
- International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, 1976
- Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979
- Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhumane, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 1984
- Convention on the Right of the Child, 1989

Though all these acts are valid in India and fully applicable in the Indian judiciary system, the system of law and order has failed. IT IS TIME THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TAKES NOTE AND DOES SOMETHING TO PROTECT THE CIVILIANS OF INDIA.

Please acknowledge this letter and let me know of the steps you will take to bring relief to the more than 260 million fellow human beings who need it. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
SatyaGuru.org, Maryland, USA

Fact Sheet – Atrocity in India

- Every hour in India, two Dalits (untouchables of South Asia) are brutally assaulted.
- Every day, three Dalit women are raped, two Dalits are murdered, and two Dalit homes are burned.
- 37% of Dalits live below the poverty line in India.
- More than half (54%) of Dalit children are undernourished in India.
- 85 per 1,000 children born in Dalit communities die before their first birthday.
- 45% of Dalits do not know how to read or write in India.
- Dalit women bear double discrimination (gender and caste) in India.
- About one-third of Dalit households do not have basic facilities, such as toilets.
- 90% of the villages do not have burial ground for the dead.
- There are more children forced into labor in India than throughout the whole world put together.
- Human trafficking and prostitution of poor people are rampant

(Source: Ministry of Welfare of the Government of India, Annual Report 1992–1993)

Crimes against Dalits increase yearly (135,771 cases were reported in 1999; 137,492 cases were reported in 2000). More than 28,000 incidents of crime against scheduled caste/scheduled tribe (SC/ST) Indians were committed in 2005, according to the National Crimes Records Bureau.

There are numerous massacres, and Dalit carnages take place under the nose of state governments and law enforcement officials. Until recently, the world was not even aware of this human cruelty. Thanks to the Internet and better communication systems, the news of such heinous crimes travels the world in minutes. But even in such an era, the Indian government has not taken measures to curtail these atrocities. It was the recent “Khairlanji Buddhist massacre” of September 29, 2006, that caused the world to pay attention for a minute. The inaction and carelessness of the government regarding the Khairlanji incident created a strong reaction among the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and Buddhists in Maharashtra and other parts of India. But this time, the Indian atrocities also garnered international attention. The UN recently condemned the lack of law and order in India and warned the government about not taking adequate steps to protect the SC/STs (Ref: Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) Report 2007).

REGISTERED ATROCITIES IN INDIA, 1999–2004

Year	FIRs filed & Cases Registered under SC/ST Act	Poor Conviction rate in the Courts	FIR Cases Registered under PCR Act	Conviction in the Courts under PCR	Total FIR Cases Registered on Atrocity	Total Conviction in Courts	% of Convictions
1999	25093	655	4450	45	29543	700	2.36
2000	23742	901	3958	81	27770	982	3.54
2002	27894	3748	526	150	28420	3898	13.71
2003	22603	2727	651	13	23254	2740	11.78
2004	23629	3259	126	34	23755	3293	13.86
Total	122961	11290	9711	323	132672	11613	8.75

* Data for 2001 are not available.

(Source: Annual Report of Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment of India)

The conviction rate under the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act is 15.71%, and as much as 85.37% of cases are pending. The Indian government enacted the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act in 1989. Unfortunately, it has proved to be lame duck legislature. Nothing has improved, or even changed, for the Dalits. Many atrocity cases remain unreported by the casteist police, so the judicial system does not register the crimes. The caste-dominated newspapers also do not report atrocities. It has only been with increased access to the internet that atrocity statistics have been made available. Following are some of the sites with current data:

- www.satyaguru.org
- www.upliftthem.blogspot.com
- www.dalits.org
- <http://nhrc.nic.in>
- www.nyuhr.org
- www.dalitinternational.org
- <http://atrocitynews.wordpress.com>
- www.ambedkar.net

Abuse and Exploitation of Children in India

Millions of India's children are denied the most basic rights of survival and protection. Child Relief and You (CRY) compiled the following grim data on the children of India based on its experience:

- Children from 100 million families live without water at home.
- Children from 150 million families live in households without electricity.
- Less than half of India's children between the ages of 6 and 14 go to school.
- A little more than one-third of all children who enroll in grade one reach grade eight.
- One in every 10 children is disabled in India.
- Only 60% of Indian children (the total child population below 14 is 228 million) reach grade five, and many of those "completing" primary school cannot read or write.

- 100 million child laborers in India work in hazardous or exploitative conditions.
- Children often work 12–15 hours per day, making less than a penny.
- 15 million Indian children are bonded laborers.
- There are 11 million Indian children living on the streets.
- 50% of children between the ages of 6 and 14 have no access to primary education.
- 25% of the victims of commercial sexual exploitation in India are below 18 years of age.
- Poor and bonded families often “sell” their children to contractors, who promise lucrative jobs in the cities. The children end up being employed in brothels and hotels, doing domestic work. Many run away and live on the streets.
- There are approximately 2 million child commercial sex workers between the ages of 5 and 15 years, and about 3.3 million between 15 and 18 years. They form 40% of the total population of commercial sex workers in India, and 71% are illiterate. 500,000 children are forced into this trade every year.

In addition to the deaths of infants and children due to malnourishment, disease, and exploitation, innumerable and unrecorded numbers of female children are killed within hours of being born. Many others are killed in the womb. Patriarchal norms, the low status of women, and preference for male children are the primary factors threatening survival of female children in India. This repeatedly occurs in downtrodden communities due to poor education. Following are some facts about female children in India:

- One out of every six girls does not live to see her 15th birthday.
- One-third of female deaths take place at birth.
- Every sixth female child’s death is due to gender discrimination.
- One out of every 10 women reported some kind of child sexual abuse during childhood, chiefly by someone they knew.
- One out of four girls is sexually abused before the age of 4.
- 300,000 more girls than boys die every year.
- Female mortality exceeds male mortality in 224 out of 402 districts in India.
- Even if a female escapes infanticide or feticide, she is less likely to receive immunization, nutrition, or medical treatment, compared to a male child.
- 53% of females between the ages of 5 and 9 are illiterate.

In India, aborted female fetuses are sometimes found on the roads. Workers cleaning drains in a northern Indian town recently discovered two aborted female fetuses, a find that highlights the country’s bias against girls. A few weeks later, a bag turned up in Alwar in Rajasthan containing a dozen female fetuses and dead baby girls that police believe was dumped by a nursing home. Also recently, a Hindu businessman’s house was raided because he was suspected of kidnapping and raping minor girls and boys. About 40 skeletons were found there, out of which 80% were from Dalit and downtrodden communities.

Devdasi (Prostitution) System in Hindu Temples

There are several causes of child prostitution, but one of the most insidious is the Devdasi system. Devdasis are girls dedicated to a goddess at a young age and forced to work as prostitutes in temples. Their parents, being uneducated, fall prey to false promises made by the Brahmins who run the Hindu temples. They are told that their daughters will be servants of God,

and they marry the girls to a goddess in a ceremony that takes place twice a year. Once a girl is married to a goddess, she cannot marry a mortal. About 5,000 girls are dedicated to a goddess every year.

Another ceremony, known as Lawni (touching ceremony), occurs when a girl reaches puberty and is sold to the highest bidder. One-third of these girls, of which three-fourths are under 14 years old, are in Bombay's cheapest brothels. They belong to low castes, such as Mahar and Matang, which give low priority to education. People in these castes are so poverty-stricken, that fathers, brothers, and husbands do not hesitate to sell their daughters, sisters, and wives.

Though the Prevention of Devdasis Act was enacted in 1935, the Devdasis system continues today. In Delhi, it was estimated that 50% of the prostitutes became prostitutes because they were forced into the profession via the Devdasi system, and 15% of prostitutes are Devdasis in Bombay, Pune, Solapur, and Sangli. Another important act, the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, was passed by both houses of parliament in 1986, yet child marriages are still common. Often, the bride is much younger than the groom, so he forces her into prostitution.

Untouchability

A recent study of untouchability in rural India that covered 565 villages in 11 states found the following:

- Public health workers refused to visit Dalit homes in 33% of villages.
- Dalits were prevented from entering the police station in 27.6% of villages.
- Dalit children had to sit separately while eating in 37.8% of government schools.
- Dalits did not get mail delivered to their homes in 23.5% of villages.
- Dalits were denied access to water sources in 48.4% of villages.
- Half of India's Dalit children are undernourished and 21% are severely underweight.
- Literacy rates for Dalit women are as low as 37.8% in rural India.

Untouchability in schools has contributed to drop-out and illiteracy levels for Dalit children far beyond those of the general population, with the "literacy gap" between Dalits and non-Dalits hardly changing since India's independence. Democracy does not mean anything to Dalits, as they are treated below animals in Hindu society.

Dalit women, who alongside "tribal" women, are the poorest of the poor in India, face double discrimination on the basis of caste and gender in all spheres of life. They are subjected to gross violations of their physical integrity, including sexual abuse by dominant castes, and are socially excluded and economically exploited.

The National Commission for Scheduled Castes has observed substantial underallocation and underexpenditure of the allocation for Dalit welfare and development under the government's Special Component Plan for Scheduled Castes. Dalits are subjected to bonded and forced labor

and discriminated against in a range of markets, including the labor, housing, consumer, capital, and credit markets. They are paid lower wages and subjected to longer working hours and delayed wages. Verbal and physical abuse takes place in broad daylight in public, at times in front of the police.

Brahmin, Shatriya, and Vaishya castes make up 15% of the population, yet claim about 65% of the upper-level jobs (see the following table). This is another form of casteism and discrimination.

Caste	Population	Politics	Employed	Commerce	Land	Education
Brahmin	3.5	41.0	62	10	5	-----
Shatriya	5.5	15.0	12	27	80	-----
Vaishya	6.0	10.5	13	60	9	-----
Total	15	66.5	87	97	94	78
SC	15.0	11.0	4	0.1	0.5	6
ST	7.5	7.6	1	0.1	0.5	2
OBC	52.0	8.0	7	0.8	4.0	2
Minorities	10.5	3.0	1	2.0	1.0	2
Total	85.0	33.5	13	3.0	6.0	22

(Source: Mahanayak, *Marathi daily newspaper from Bombay, P1, Head News, 4-30-2006*)

Gross Injustice Occurs Every Day in India

Recently, a small village in Bhandara district, Maharashtra, was the focus of attention when four members of a Dalit family were slaughtered on September 29, 2006. The victims were stripped naked, dragged from their hut to the village plaza 500 meters away, and hacked to death by an entire village of upper-caste Indians. So far, all political parties and the local administration have covered up the matter. More than a week after the gruesome killings took place, no member of the legislative assembly (MLA) or members of parliament (MP) from Bhandara had visited the village. Two MLAs from Nagpur, ostensibly sent by congress higher-ups, visited Khairlanji, but did not make any noise. Not a single villager's statement was recorded. The local village police and village administrative authorities worked hand-in-hand with the killers. Another recent event in the village of Kadkol, Basavanabagewadi Taluk, Bijapur District, was reported by *The Hindu* on October 21, 2006. Families from 93 scheduled castes were boycotted by upper-caste landlords as a punishment for drinking water from a public tank. The families, made up mostly of landless laborers and including hundreds of children, reached starvation. The landlords felt their water supply was polluted by the untouchables drinking from it. This is not a one-village event or a one-time event; it takes place 24/7/365 across India, yet the Indian government does not protect and safeguard Dalits from such oppression.