

# Resolution on caste discrimination in India

2012/2909(RSP) - 13/12/2012 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 46 votes to 0 with 0 abstentions a resolution on caste discrimination in India.

The resolution was tabled by the ECR, S&D, Greens/EFA, EPP, ALDE and GUE/NGL groups.

Whilst Members acknowledge the efforts at federal, state, regional and local level in India to eradicate caste discrimination and applaud the clear stance against caste discrimination taken by many Indian public figures, they remain **alarmed at the persistently large number of reported and unreported atrocities and widespread untouchability practices**, notably manual scavenging. Despite the efforts undertaken so far, **an estimated 170 million Dalits and indigenous Adivasi in India continue to suffer** from severe forms of social exclusion. Despite being legally banned, manual scavenging continues to be widespread, with hundreds of thousands of almost exclusively female Dalits performing this form of servitude, Indian Railways being the largest single employer of manual scavengers. Parliament calls on the Indian Parliament to act on its plans to **pass a new Bill prohibiting employment of manual scavengers** and securing their rehabilitation, and on the Indian Government to take the necessary measures for its immediate enforcement.

Generally, it urges the Indian authorities at federal, state, regional and local level to honour their pledges and to implement or, if necessary, amend the existing legislation, notably the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, in order to effectively protect Dalits and other vulnerable groups in society.

Members call on the Council, the Commission, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the Commission (HR/VP), the EU Special Representative on Human Rights, and the EU Member States to **develop an EU policy on caste discrimination** and to endorse the draft UN Principles and Guidelines for the Effective Elimination of Discrimination based on Work and Descent in the UN Human Rights Council. It also calls on the EU's and the Member States' representations in India **to include the issue of caste discrimination in their dialogues with the Indian authorities, and to prioritise programmes addressing caste discrimination**, including in education, and programmes with particular focus on women and girls. It expects future EU cooperation with India to be assessed as to how it would affect caste discrimination.

Parliament recalls that Dalit and Adivasi women are the poorest of the poor in India, face multiple discrimination on the basis of caste and gender, are frequently subjected to gross violations of their physical integrity, including sexual abuse with impunity by members of dominant castes, and are socially excluded and economically exploited, with a literacy rate of only 24 %. Between 100 000 and 200 000 girls – the majority of them Dalits – are allegedly trapped in bonded labour in spinning mills in Tamil Nadu which supply yarn to factories that produce garments for western brands. In addition, the vast majority of crimes against Dalit women are not reported owing to fear of social ostracism and threats to personal safety and security. In this connection, **Parliament underlines, particularly, the need for victims to be able to safely register their cases with the police and judicial authorities**, as well as for serious follow-up by the police and judiciary of reported atrocities and other cases of discrimination, noting that the conviction rate under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act continues to be very low, providing no deterrent against crimes.

Lastly, the resolution calls on the Indian authorities to repeal those provisions of the Foreign Contribution (Regulations) Act, which do not conform to international standards and potentially undermine the work of

NGOs, including Dalit organisations and other organisations representing disadvantaged groups in Indian society, by impeding them from receiving funds from international donors.