

European Parliament holds hearing on caste discrimination

Untouchability continues to exist in India in 144 different forms, Dalit activists told a hearing of the European Parliament (EP), EuAsiaNews reported Wednesday.

'India is called the largest democracy in the world but 167 million Dalits are facing all kinds of atrocities,' Vincent Manoharan, general secretary, National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights, told the hearing on Caste Discrimination in South Asia held Tuesday evening.

He held that '144 forms of untouchability practices exist in India', and said he expects the EU to act fast to end these discriminations.

Manoharan said there were many laws and legislation in India for the protection of the scheduled castes but their implementation 'was weak'.

The hearing was sponsored by four Members of the European Parliament, Margrete Auken from Denmark, Jean Lambert and Claude Moraes from Britain, and Maria Martens from the Netherlands, in cooperation with the Denmark-based International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN).

Auken said that last year, the EP was one of the first international institutions to adopt a resolution on the situation of Dalits in India, but caste discrimination is a huge problem in the rest of South Asia as well as in many other parts of the world.

'We must show much more support to the struggle against caste discrimination and it's time that the European Union move from rhetoric to action,' she stressed.

Manjula Pradeep, executive director of Navsarjan, a Dalit organisation in Gujarat, said 'India is being ruled by castes not by laws'.

'There is one incredible India and one untouchable India,' she said, adding that 'what we are claiming from the EP is justice'.

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