



## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

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### **UK on the brink of outlawing caste discrimination**

The British Government is set to become the first to outlaw caste discrimination as part of the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

The Equality Bill sparked anger from India after an amendment was made by the House of Lords to prohibit caste discrimination as part of race discrimination. This amendment was made due to increasing concerns within Parliament following a report published by the Anti-Caste Discrimination Alliance last year which detailed the discrimination and persecution of lower caste Indians, and particularly of Dalits, in Britain.

An Indian Government official was quoted as saying, "India's position on this issue has been clear and consistent. Caste and race discrimination are two separate issues and there is no case to equate the two. We are opposed to attempts at international fora to equate the issues."

India's Constitution, Penal code and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989 outlaw caste discrimination. India also backed moves to include all caste discrimination as a feature of racism in the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination but it changed its position in 1996.

Dr Udit Raj who is India's leading campaigner for Dalit rights and a member of DFN UK's Indian Advisory Group, welcomed the Equality Bill and told The Daily Telegraph:

"The United Kingdom has done the right thing. The new law will give moral boost to the people discriminated on the basis of their caste and will force the UN to include caste as a tool of discrimination. The government of India has been adopting dual standards. At world forums they accept Indians are victims of caste but when it comes to local politics and policies they cash in on caste politics."

However, caste discrimination will not be included in the law until further research has been undertaken. The Act includes an enabling power to allow the government, in future, to extend the definition of 'race' to include 'caste'. The Government is not yet convinced that protection against caste discrimination is in fact necessary and the National Institute of Economic and Social Research has been tasked to research caste prejudice in the UK before any decision will be made.

Dalit Freedom Network UK also welcomes the move as it believes that caste discrimination along with the poverty and oppression that it brings is at the heart of why the Dalit people are one of the largest groups of people trafficked in the world today. By outlawing caste discrimination in the UK, this Bill provides a platform for further dialogue with the Indian Government on the impact of caste discrimination on the human trafficking industry.

Ends

#### Notes to Editors:

- Dalit Freedom Network UK (DFN UK) is a working name of Freedom Network International, a charity registered in January 2008 in England and Wales.
- DFN UK is a non religious, non-partisan human rights organisation.
- DFN UK has an office in London.
- DFN UK currently comprises: 6 trustees; 9 part time volunteers; 1 part time employee – Campaign Manager (to be appointed in 2010).
- The aim of DFN UK is to bring an end to the trafficking of Dalit men, women and children into various forms of modern day slavery by specifically focusing on educating and leveraging support from the UK while working with Indian and other international partners.
- DFN UK is unique as it is the only organisation in the UK focused on the issue of Dalit trafficking.
- DFN UK launched a UK focused three year programme in 2010. The foundation of the programme is educating the British population about the problem of Dalit trafficking in order to gather support for the anti-trafficking programme both in the UK and in India. The support will come in the form of fundraising, UK advocacy, generating volunteers to travel to India and physically support anti-trafficking programme activities, generating support from individuals in specific professions such as legal, healthcare, victim care, witness protection, to provide targeted advice and assistance to key areas of the anti-trafficking programme. This three year programme is the first programme undertaken by DFN UK. The organisation's previous function was to facilitate Indians championing the Dalit cause engaging with the UK public and politicians on an occasional basis.
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