

Concern about constraints human rights organizations in India

Dutch Parliament wants support to (Dalit) women in India

An almost two-third majority in Dutch Parliament urges the Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Timmermans and the Minister of Foreign Trade and Development co-operation, Mrs. Ploumen, to support action against (sexual) violence against women, in particular Dalit women who “run an even higher risk to become the victim of various forms of sexual and other forms of violence” and who are victims of an “extraordinarily high level of impunity for perpetrators”?

The Parliament refers to a resolution about sexual violence against women in India that was recently adopted by the European Parliament. But the Parliament also quotes statements of Minister Timmermans in December 2012 during the budget discussions about “strengthening the position of Dalits”. Seven parties (Christian Union, Labour, Christian Democrats, Green Left, Socialist Party, Democrats 66 and Reformed Political Party) ask the government “in which way the Dutch government is planning to contribute to improving the position of 100 million Dalit women in India?”

The Parliament in addition asks the Ministers what the Dutch government is going to do to support the winner of the Dutch Human Rights Tulip 2012, Dalit activist Marimuthu Bharathan in his struggle for human rights of Dalits. This e.g. relates to monitoring the criminal court case against him and 23 other Dalit accused because of a – according to human rights organizations – false accusation of murder and obstructing Bharathan’s work by the Tamil Nadu government.

The Parliament is also very concerned about the fact that the Indian government has put a large number of Indian and international organization on the “suspect list” and imposed visa restrictions for the latter. More than 4.000 organizations have had their FCRA (Foreign Contribution & Regulation Act) registration withdrawn. The Parliament wants the Dutch government to urgently request the Indian government to make this list public. It is feared that the measures taken severely limit the effectiveness of Dutch private funding in India and the operational and political space of civil society organizations. For many organizations withdrawal of their FCRA license means that these organizations cannot receive any foreign funding anymore.

The *Voluntary Action Network India (VANI)* expresses the fear that the recent newspaper reports about NGOs being on the suspect list of the Indian government are aimed to silence the movement for the rights of women. Therefore the Parliament wants to know if there are concrete indications that support to women’s organizations, Dalit organizations and other human rights organizations are being blocked or hampered.

Many Dutch organizations – including the India Committee of the Netherlands – but also e.g. journalists do experience serious problems in getting visa for India. The Parliament requests the government to give her assessment about the issuing of visa by India to Dutch citizens.

Finally the Dutch parliament wants the government to raise the constraints for the freedom of association and freedom of speech of Indian organizations who are working for human rights with the European Union, in order to bring this issue jointly to the attention of the Indian government.

See the questions by the Dutch Parliament (and answers by Minister of Foreign Affairs):
<http://www.indianet.nl/pdf/kv130312e.pdf>