

DECLARATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN INDIA

WE ARE DEEPLY PERTURBED about the fact that the fundamental human rights, as laid down by the international community of peoples in the United Nations, are being systematically and in many different ways violated in India today. About 350 million people in India, out of a total population of nearly 700 million, live below the poverty line. These hundred millions suffer under religious, socio-economic as well as political oppression which is in complete defiance of the fundamental human rights. Some of the most effected groups in India are:

- the 'untouchables' or 'Harijans', about 100 million in total;
- the 40 million original inhabitants of India: the tribals.

Economically and politically the human rights of the more than 200 million other Indians living below the absolute poverty line are also being violated.

The Indian government has passed many laws directed towards an amelioration of the living conditions of the poorest groups in general and the Harijans and tribals in particular. The declared land-reforms, the abolition of untouchability and the reservation of jobs for Harijans and tribals are examples hereof. These laws, however, have not brought about any substantial improvement in their situations. Only about 10% of the declared land-reforms have been carried out, 'untouchability' is still a real social fact and only a very small percentage of Harijans and tribals have benefitted from the job-reservation system. One very important reason for this failure seems to be the unwillingness which Indian governments display to genuinely implement the laws.

In addition, WE WISH TO EXPRESS OUR GREAT CONCERN AND DISGUST about the increasing physical repression towards Harijans and tribals. This seems to be a reaction to their individual and collective protest regarding the violation of their rights. In the Indian press quite regularly mention is made of mass-murders of Harijans and tribals, victimized by the vested interests in rural areas. These mass-murders are registered as 'atrocities' by the Government Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Other acts in the category of 'atrocities' are rape, arson and physical violence. It does not concern 'normal' criminality:

these are crimes committed in reprisal to Harijan and tribal resistance. The number of registered 'atrocities' has increased dramatically from 8,860 cases in 1974 to 13,746 in 1980. One must keep in mind that these figures only reflect a small part of the actually committed 'atrocities'. The fact that the police is often either actively involved in the 'incidents', or gives protection to the attackers, indicates the enormity of the problem.

WE ARE CONVINCED that it is the responsibility of the Indian government and the international community to do their utmost in order to ensure the fundamental human rights in India.

WE ARE GREATLY CONCERNED about the fact that:

- the Indian government has neglected to implement the existing laws directed towards the protection and the improvement of the religious-cultural, the socio-economic and the political human rights, especially for Harijans and tribals;
- the Indian government has taken inadequate new incentives to guarantee these fundamental human rights;
- the Indian government has not adequately taken measures to counter the increasing number of 'atrocities' committed to Harijans and tribals;
- the Indian government itself is passing laws, such as the Internal Security Act (which makes preventive custody possible) and the ESMA (prohibiting strikes in key-industries), which are contrary to fundamental human rights;
- the international community is insufficiently aware of the large-scale violation of human rights in India and is taking too little action.

THE UNDERSIGNED ASK:

- the Indian government to take all measures which could guarantee or improve the human rights situation in India;..
- the Dutch government and parliament, as well as the international organizations in which they are represented, to express their disgust with regard to the large-scale violation of human rights in India and to insist upon adequate measures by the Indian government. Furthermore, WE URGENTLY REQUEST the Dutch government and parliament to direct Dutch Development Aid primarily towards the aim of improving the living conditions of the poorest sections in India.

UNDERSIGNED ALSO CALL UPON all Dutch social organizations, such as political parties, trade unions, employers-, youth-, students-, farmers-, women- and private Development Aid organizations, to discuss the above mentioned issue within the own group, to approach related Dutch, Indian, European or International organizations and demand a standpoint, and to request the Indian government to take concrete measures to terminate the violation of the human rights in India.

UNDERSIGNED DECLARE THEMSELVES SOLIDARY with the activities of those Indian and non-Indian organizations attempting to protect and improve the fundamental human rights of all Indians.