

On the occasion of the presentation on 15 April 2010 of the *National Call to Abolish Untouchability* by Dalit and non-Dalit organizations in India with support from international solidarity groups.

E & E COALITION

EMPOWERMENT AND ENTITLEMENT COALITION

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PRESS RELEASE

Even after 60 years of India's constitutional rule abolition of untouchability still remains only a pipedream in India. While discrimination based on descent and occupation continues unabated those caste forces that practice untouchability in its varying forms are having a field day in India. It is not enough that the abolition of untouchability is enshrined in the constitution of India. It is of paramount important that the enforcement of related laws are stringently followed so that Dalits in this country can live as citizens with freedom and dignity. While discrimination based on descent and occupation denies many opportunities to Dalits to come into level playing field the continuing practice of untouchability serves a deathblow to their human psyche that is essential for citizens. Without freedom and dignity no people can be expected to exercise their democratic rights and responsibilities as citizens.

The Empowerment and Entitlement Coalition of India, which consists of many non-Dalit and Dalit civil society groups, people's movements, NGOs, individuals and international solidarity groups takes a serious view of the shrinking democratic space of the Dalit people in India because of the practice of untouchability. The Coalition has identified the many practices of untouchability that pose serious threat to the social fabric of this nation. The Coalition gives a clarion call to all the citizens and rulers of this country to do everything they can to abolish untouchability within a given timeframe.

The members of the E&E Coalition are people who have been working with the Dalits and non-Dalits both in rural and in urban areas and are serious practitioners of civil society rights for many decades. We appeal to the Prime Minister of India and to the Chairperson of the UPA to immediately put an end to all forms and practices of untouchability that are still widely prevalent in India. A detailed document of the *National Call to Abolish Untouchability* is attached herewith. We appeal to the citizens of India to give wide publicity to the prevalence of these practices and urge all their friends to put pressure on the state and central governments to abolish untouchability in India immediately.

Mr. Malla Reddy

On behalf of Empowerment and Entitlement Coalition, India

Timbaktu collective, Chennekothapalli village
Ananthapur district , Andhra Pradesh – 515 101

The National Call to Abolish Untouchability can be found here:
<http://www.dalits.nl/pdf/AbolishUntouchabilityNow.pdf>