

## **PRESS RELEASE    CasteWatchUK**

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### **Narendra Modi's visit to the UK comes at a time when in India violence against Dalits has risen to astronomical levels**

**CasteWatchUK would like to express its profound concern about the marked deterioration of Human Rights in India since the Bharatiya Janata Party(BJP) government of Narendra Modi came to power. There has, in particular, been an acute escalation of barbaric attacks on Dalits which are a direct result of the upper-caste Hindu supremacist ideology of the BJP. We note that it is against this background that Mr Modi has decided to visit the UK.**

**In the face of on-going violence from upper-caste Hindu supremacists of Narendra Modi's BJP and its sister organisations, CasteWatchUK notes with dismay that Mr Modi is due to inaugurate Ambedkar House and unveil a statue of the great Dalit leader, thinker and author of India's Constitution.**

#### **Why we are concerned**

Horrific violence against Dalits has become a daily experience in India. Typical of these atrocities are two recent cases in Faridabad, Haryana State. In one, two children, a 3 year old boy and his 9 month old sister were burnt alive by upper-caste Hindus. In the other a 15 year old Dalit boy was beaten to death for not turning off the music he was playing when he passed an upper-caste area. The Cabinet Minister VK Singh likened the murder of the children to someone throwing a stone at a dog - such is the contempt for Dalits, openly expressed, by a Minister in Narendra Modi's government.

India is still predominantly a feudal society. Dominant castes, who in rural India are the landowners, perpetrate the most heinous crimes of rape, arson, murder of Dalits, specifically targeting women and children. Dalit women are often forced to parade naked sometimes for the most minor of disagreements, or else even for 'not showing respect'. There is also a propensity by the ruling elites to dismiss atrocities as law and order issues. Studies show, however, that Dalits are specifically targeted because of the resentment felt by upper-castes, particularly when Dalits try to rise above the down-trodden status ascribed to them, or when they try to assert their human rights.

This appalling state of affairs has got far worse in the last two years, deteriorating first during Modi's election campaign in 2013, and then deteriorating, even more acutely, since he has come to power. The primary reason for this is the BJP's polarising upper-caste Hindu supremacist ideology.

## **Murders and rapes of Dalits have risen with the increasing influence of the BJP**

According to a recent report in the Times of India<sup>1</sup> dated 22 October 2015 , crimes against Dalits, who are also known as Scheduled Castes (SCs), rose 19 percent last year, on top of a 17 per cent increase in 2013. In addition, as many as 744 Dalits were murdered last year, up from 676 in 2013. In Haryana alone, 21 Dalits were murdered in 2014.

According to statistics compiled by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) in 2012 there were 33,655 crimes against Scheduled Castes ( or Dalits) about the same as in 2011. These figures rose to a horrific 47,064 in 2014 from 39,408 in 2013.

In fact, the rate of such crimes against Dalits surpassed the national average in as many as 10 states in 2013 and 2014. The rate of crime is the number of crimes reported against SCs per[100,000] of their population. In 2014, the rate of crime against Dalits was 23.4 and in 2013 it was 19.57.

NCRB statistics show that 2,233 Dalit women were raped in 2014, up from 2,073 in 2013, 1,576 in 2012, 1,557 in 2011, 1,349 in 2010 and 1,346 in 2009. Kidnappings and abductions also went up in these years, barring in 2012 when there was a marginal decline. Against 755 kidnappings/abductions in 2014, there were 628 in 2013, 490 in 2012, 616 in 2011, 511 in 2010 and 512 in 2009.

## **The Weapon of Social Boycott is going unchallenged by State agencies**

Social boycott is another weapon used to suppress the Dalits often rendering them helpless, unable to purchase goods or go into fields to graze animals, or even walk down a pathway wearing decent clothes as this is frowned upon by dominant castes as being above their station. If they start a small scale business then dominant castes ostracise them.

Where law enforcement agencies actually do their job they have frequently faced threat, for example, as the Hindu Newspaper reported on 2 November 2015 :

*On 31st October, officers representing the district administration had a tough time in Village Sigaranahalli in Holenarasipur [district] taluk on Saturday evening, when they visited the village following a complaint from Dalit families alleging that the dominant castes had imposed a social boycott on them. The dominant castes allegedly surrounded the officers and challenged them to file cases against them, whilst defending the social boycott on Dalits in the village<sup>2</sup>.*

At the same time there are many instances where law enforcement agencies work in collusion with politicians. A series of murders where this collusion took place in Bihar, in the 90s, was recently exposed by Cobrapost<sup>3</sup>, an Indian news portal and here the upper-castes were supported by upper-caste Hindu supremacists. Not one of the killers has been sentenced.

CasteWatchUK supports the statements by the numerous intellectuals, academics, eminent scientists, historians, free thinkers and literary figures who are returning India's top civilian awards in protest. As one prominent scientist, Dr P. M Bhargava recently said: *"We reject*

*the narrow view of India that seeks to dictate what people will wear, think, eat and who they will love. ... we appeal to all other sections of society to raise their voice against the assault on reason and scientific temper [that] we are witnessing in India today."*

### **What we think about Mr Modi inaugurating Ambedkar House**

**We condemn the way Narendra Modi has tried to pit Dalits and Muslims against each other in the just-concluded Bihar election campaign. Against this background and against the continuing atrocities against Dalits under the present government with its upper-caste Hindutva ideology, Mr Muman, Chairman of CasteWatchUK says:**

*'We regard Modi's planned inauguration of Ambedkar House as a cynical PR exercise which aims merely to show the world that he cares about the Dalit community. However, it is also an insult to the memory of Ambedkar. There is a danger that the continued hero-worship of Prime Minister Modi will move the country down a slippery slope towards dictatorship and fascism'.*

We urge the Indian Prime Minister to abandon these lavish PR exercises and in its place:

- to focus on a nation-wide campaign to uproot the culture of violence against minorities and Dalits and in its place embed a culture of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity and Justice as enshrined in the Preamble to the Indian Constitution.
- that exemplary fines and punishments must be imposed on perpetrators of caste violence with national media coverage to act as deterrence.
- that the development agenda as pursued by the present government must not only be restricted to economic gains but also extend developing the human capital free from caste prejudice so that benefits accrues to all and not to just the few.
- that policies must be specifically targeted toward the development of Dalit communities who are treated as sub-human in their own country to enable them to rise and to live a life of dignity and prosperity.

### **References:**

<sup>1</sup> <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Crimes-against-Dalits-rose-19-in-2014-murders-rose-to-744/articleshow/49488994.cms>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/village-tense-after-imposition-of-social-boycott-on-dalits/article7831277.ece>

<sup>3</sup> <http://cobrapost.com/index.php/news-detail?nid=8983&cid=23>

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**CasteWatchUK championed the campaign to make Caste Based Discrimination Illegal in the UK.  
It is the largest organisation representing interest of Dalits in UK.**