



United Nations Human Rights Council: 26th Session (10th to 27th June 2014)
Item 8 General Debate
Tuesday 24 June 2014
Speaker: BHA Representative, Amelia Cooper
Justice, Inequality, and Caste Discrimination

Thank you Mr President.

Over twenty years ago, the Vienna Declaration prioritized the *'speedy and comprehensive elimination of all forms of racism and racial discrimination'*¹, including *'in their institutionalized forms...resulting from doctrines of racial superiority or exclusivity'*.²

However, caste discrimination, *'the very negation of...equality and non-discrimination'*³, persists, affecting 260 million people worldwide.

While caste discrimination has been criminalized in many States, the recourse to justice for Dalits is notoriously non-existent.

In Uttar Pradesh, India, the villagers of Katra were so convinced that the brutal rape and murder of two Dalit girls would not be investigated that they sat under their bodies, preventing authorities from removing them until the suspects were arrested.⁴

In Kavalewada village, in Maharashtra State, India, a long-standing land dispute led to the murder of Dalit activist Sanjay Khobragade. It has been reported that while he slept, six men from a higher caste entered his home, poured petrol over his body, and set him on fire.⁵ While on his deathbed, Khobragade was filmed identifying the culprits,⁶ however, they remain free. A further twist to this heinous crime has seen Khobragade's wife and neighbor arbitrarily imprisoned, accused of having an extra-marital affair and killing Khobragade: both have testified to being tortured and beaten in jail. Khobragade's son asks, *'Does being Dalit mean my family deserves no justice?'*⁷

Inequality will prevail as long as impunity exists. In order to fulfill the aims of non-discrimination and equality as detailed in the Vienna Declaration, we urge States to:

- Implement social programmes to translate de jure equality into de facto enjoyment of human rights;
- Ensure that justice is served for Dalit victims, including Sanjay Khobragade;
- Renew their attention to draft UN Principles and Guidelines for the effective elimination of discrimination based on work and descent.

Thank you.

¹ The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, I.15, <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/vienna.aspx>

² The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, B.1.15, <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/vienna.aspx>

³ Navi Pillay, High Commissioner for Human Rights, 19th October 2009

⁴ <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=14736&LangID=E>

⁵ Navi Pillay, High Commissioner for Human Rights, speech on 17 June 2014

⁶ <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=14736&LangID=E>

⁷ Reported in multiple media outlets, including <http://www.thehindu.com/news/nationa/other-states/dalit-man-set-ablaze-over-land-dispute-in-gondia/article6023480.ece>; <http://www.videovolunteers.org/police-ignores-dying-declaration-accused-bail-sanjay-khobragade-murder-case/>

⁸ <http://www.videovolunteers.org/police-ignores-dying-declaration-accused-bail-sanjay-khobragade-murder-case/>

⁹ Pradeep Khobragade, as in his petition for justice <http://www.change.org/en-IN/petitions/my-mother-didnt-kill-my-father-de-amit-saini-investigate-the-murder-of-dalit-rights-activist-sanjay-khobragade>