

Federica Mogherini  
High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy  
Vice-President of the Commission  
European Commission  
1049 Brussels

Dear Ms Mogherini,

29 June, 2016

We are writing to you as MEPs who are deeply concerned with the serious human rights violations and persistent development challenges linked to caste discrimination. At least 260 million people around the globe face appalling and dehumanising discrimination based on caste and similar systems of inherited status.

The issues have recently been presented in a thematic report by the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues<sup>1</sup> and discussed by the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) at its 31<sup>st</sup> session. Special Rapporteur Rita Izsák-Ndiaye warned “that discrimination leads to extreme exclusion and dehumanisation of caste-affected communities, who are often among the most disadvantaged populations, experience the worst socioeconomic conditions and are deprived of or severely restricted in the enjoyment of their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights”.

The OHCHR has made the elimination of caste-based discrimination a strategic priority in its anti-discrimination work, and the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN General Secretary have established caste as a ground of discrimination to be tackled on par with other forms of discrimination.

We appeal to you as High Representative to ensure that EU action to address discrimination based on caste and analogous forms of discrimination is prioritised at the highest levels i.e.:

- in EU public diplomacy on caste-based discrimination and in support to initiatives at the multilateral level noting the lagging behind of agenda setting and adequate action on the topic; and
- in human rights and policy dialogues with states with caste-affected populations noting in particular UN recommendations related to caste discrimination, and the need to take the topic into consideration in partnership agreements, joint strategies and programming.

In line with the European Parliament [resolution P7\\_TA\(2013\)0420](#), we strongly recommend:

- development and implementation of EU guidance on caste discrimination, with targeted action at all levels;
- mainstreaming the topic in the thematic issues, in the EEAS and Commission guidelines and action plans; specifically on the fight against all forms of discrimination as well as efforts to combat violence against women and girls and discrimination against them;

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<sup>1</sup> [Report on Minorities and caste-based discrimination by the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues \(A/HRC/31/56\)](#)

- specific efforts by the EU to address multiple forms of discrimination; in particular the nexus of caste discrimination and violence against women, forced and bonded labour, torture, education, health, inequality, and poverty; and
- EU to promote the use of caste specific indicators and disaggregated data in the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

We urge you to take due note of the development of a UN Guidance Tool on Discrimination Based on Work and Descent (to be published in 2016) and work by UN human rights mechanisms on the topic of caste discrimination. EU should use every opportunity to express its grave concern over caste discrimination and seek to support states' implementation of these UN recommendations.

Noting the call by the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues to HRC members to endorse the draft United Nations Principles and Guidelines for the Effective Elimination of Discrimination Based on Work and Descent (published by the UN in 2009<sup>2</sup>) we urge you to highlight the need for the HRC to endorse these UN Principles and Guidelines.

The topic should be addressed in the ongoing review process on EU Human Rights Country Strategies and Action Plan Implementation, and we ask you to report on progress and new initiatives in caste-affected countries.

Caste-based discrimination is recognised as a serious impediment to ensuring equality in disaster response; EU institutions must play their part in influencing national and global stakeholders in humanitarian assistance<sup>3</sup> to adopt relevant principles and measures in humanitarian standards, disaster relief and rehabilitation.

Finally, the dramatically shrinking space for civil society in many countries of the world, including India, has severe implications, also for Dalit human rights defenders. We urge you to call on caste-affected countries to protect the rights to peaceful expression and assembly and ensure that Dalit human rights defenders are able to carry out their work without being harassed by the authorities.

Yours sincerely,

Heidi Hautala (Greens)

Barbara Lochbihler (Greens)

Jean Lambert (Greens)

Louis Michel (ALDE)

Hilde Vautmans (ALDE)

Beatriz Becerra Basterrechea (ALDE)

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<sup>2</sup> Draft UN Principles and Guidelines for the Effective Elimination of Discrimination based on Work and Descent, published by the UN already in 2009 ([A/HRC/11/CRP.3](#)).

<sup>3</sup> [Equality in aid: Addressing caste discrimination in humanitarian response](#), IDSN report 2013

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Cc: Mr Stavros Lambrinidis, EU Special Presentative for Human Rights  
Ms Ciara O'Brien, COHOM Chair

Cc: Heads of EU delegations in most affected countries:

Mr Pierre Mayaudon, Head of Delegation, Ambassador of the European Union, Bangladesh  
Mr Tomasz Kozlowski, Head of Delegation, Ambassador of the European Union, India  
Ms Rensje Teerink, Head of Delegation, Ambassador of the European Union, Nepal  
Mr Jean-Francois Cautain, Head of Delegation, Ambassador of the European Union, Pakistan  
Mr Mr David Daly, Head of Delegation, Ambassador of the European Union, Sri Lanka and Maldives  
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