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U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
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110TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. CON. RES. 139

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Whereas the Human Rights Watch and the Center for Human Rights and Global Justice at New York University School of Law released a report in February 2007 that describes caste discrimination against India's ''Untouchables'' based on in-depth investigations and the findings of Indian governmental and non-governmental organizations on caste-based abuses;

Whereas the United States and the Republic of India have entered into an unprecedented partnership;

Whereas the July 18, 2005, Joint Statement between President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh stated that, ''[a]s leaders of nations committed to the values of human freedom, democracy, and rule of law, the new relationship between India and the United States will promote stability, democracy, prosperity, and peace throughout the world [. . . and] it will enhance our ability to work together to provide global leadership in areas of mutual concern and interest'';

Whereas caste is the socioeconomic stratification of people in South Asia based on a combination of work and heredity;

Whereas the ''Untouchables'', now known as the Dalits, and the people of the forest tribes of India, called Tribals, who together number approximately 200,000,000 people, are the primary victims of caste discrimination in India;

Whereas discrimination against the Dalits and Tribals has existed for more than 2,000 years and has included educational discrimination, economic disenfranchisement, physical abuse, discrimination in medical care, religious discrimination, and violence targeting Dalit and Tribal women;

Whereas Article 17 of the Constitution of India outlaws untouchability;

Whereas despite numerous laws enacted for the protection and betterment of the Dalits and Tribals, they are still considered outcasts in Indian society and are treated as such; moreover, in practice, Dalits and Tribals are frequently denied equal treatment under the law;

Whereas Dalit women suffer both caste and gender discrimination as a result of the deficient administration of justice and are often raped and attacked with impunity;

Whereas the National Commission on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes has declared that many of the reported cases of atrocities against Dalits and Tribals end in acquittals;

Whereas, despite the fact that many Dalits do not report crimes for fear of reprisals by the dominant castes, national police statistics averaged over the past five years by the National Commission on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes show that 13 Dalits are murdered every week, five Dalits' homes or possessions are burnt every week, six Dalits are kidnapped or abducted every week, three Dalit women are raped every day, 11 Dalits are beaten every day and a crime is committed against a Dalit every 18 minutes;

Whereas many Dalit girls are forced to become temple prostitutes who are then unable to marry and may be auctioned to urban brothels, and many women trafficked in India are Dalit women;

Whereas low-caste unborn females are targeted for abortions;

Whereas according to Human Rights Watch and India's official National Family Health Survey, most Dalits and Tribals are among those poorest of the poor living on less than $1 per day; most of India's bonded laborers are Dalits; and half of India's Dalit children are undernourished, 21 percent are ''severely underweight'', and 12 percent die before their 5th birthday;

Whereas Dalits and other low-caste individuals often suffer from discrimination and segregation in government pri-

mary schools leading to low enrollment, high drop-out, and low literacy rates, perhaps linked to a perception that Dalits are not meant to be educated, are incapable of being educated, or if educated, would pose a threat to village hierarchies and power relations;

Whereas the Dalits and Tribals maintain higher illiteracy rates than non-Dalit populations; and

Whereas the HIV/AIDS epidemic is India is massive and Dalits and Tribals are significantly affected by HIV/AIDS: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That it is the sense of Congress that, as the leaders of the United States and the Republic of India have expressed commitment to the values of human freedom, democracy, and the rule of law, it is in the interests of the United States to address the problem of the treatment of the Dalits and Tribals in India in order to better meet mutual social development and human rights goals by—

(1) raising the issues of caste discrimination, violence against women, and untouchability through diplomatic channels both directly with the Government of India and within the context of international bodies;

(2) encouraging the United States Agency for International Development to ensure that the needs of Dalit organizations are incor-

porated in the planning and implementation of development projects;

(3) ensuring that projects that positively impact Dalit and Tribal communities, especially Dalit women, are developed and implemented;

(4) ensuring that cooperative research programs targeting rural health care, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and rural technology contain proper focus on the Dalits and Tribals;

(5) ensuring that anyone receiving funding in India from the United States Government—

(A) is aware that it is United States Government policy that caste discrimination is unacceptable, and that the United States is committed to eliminating it; and

(B) treat all people equally without engaging in caste discrimination;

(6) ensuring that—

(A) qualified Dalits are in no way discouraged from working with organizations receiving funding in India from the United States Government, and that transparent and fair recruitment, selection, and career development processes are implemented, with clear objective criteria; and

(B) procedures exist to detect and remedy any caste discrimination in employment conditions, wages, benefits or job security for anyone working with organizations receiving funding in India from the United States Government;

(7) encouraging United States citizens working in India to avoid discrimination toward the Dalits in all business interactions; and

(8) discussing the issue of caste during bilateral and multilateral meetings, including congressional delegations.

Passed the House of Representatives July 23, 2007.

Attest:

Clerk.

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Expressing the sense of the Congress that the United States should address the ongoing problem of untouchability in India.