

**Liberation**  
**Agenda Item 9 Racism**  
**28<sup>th</sup> September, 2010**

**Sagar Zende**

Mr. President,

Oppression of the 168 million Dalits is one of the most repelling, but enduring, realities in India even today. Equally oppressive is the violence perpetrated against them, especially their women. To be a Dalit today means living a subhuman, degraded, insecure life. Rights of Dalits to education, health, housing, property, freedom of religion, free choice of employment, and equal treatment before the law are violated every day.

Constitutionally, the notion of untouchability and discrimination against the Dalits is prohibited under the Prevention of Atrocities (POA) act 1989. The act was created to outlaw physical and verbal abuses against Dalits, but hasn't had the desired effects.

It is well documented that Dalits endure segregation in benefiting from government services. They are forced to work in degrading conditions and routinely abused at the hands of the police and upper-caste community who enjoy the state's protection.

Dalits are forced to perform menial tasks like cleaning human excreta from dry latrines. There are frequent instances when Dalits are lowered into manholes without proper safety precautions to clear sewage blockages, resulting in deaths. It has been documented that Dalits comprise the majority of agricultural, bonded, and child labourers in India.

Caste-motivated killings, rapes, and other abuses are daily occurrences in India. Human rights organisations have pointed out that both state and private actors commit these crimes with impunity. Well known today is the diversion of Special Component Plan funds by Delhi Govt entitled to Dalits for the Commonwealth Game 2010.

Even though Dalits have received wide spread attention from human rights organisations their misery continues. The Human Rights Council as UN's principal body responsible for the preservation and protection of human rights has a greater responsibility towards oppressed minorities like the Dalits.

We hope that the Council will live up to this important responsibility.

Thank you