

Nepal: UN welcomes new law on caste-based discrimination



Jyoti Sanghera, head of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal

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United Nations human rights officials and their counterparts in Nepal today welcomed a new law prohibiting discrimination against people who are considered members of low castes and are known as “untouchables” or “Dalits.”

The Bill on Caste-based Discrimination and Untouchability that was passed yesterday had been before Parliament for the past two years, according to a joint statement issued by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal (OHCHR-Nepal) and the country’s National Dalit Commission.

The new law states that caste-based discrimination and untouchability practices are prohibited in both public and private spheres, and increases punishments for public officials found responsible of discrimination.

It also requires perpetrators to provide compensation to victims and criminalizes incitement for caste-based discrimination.

“This is the first time ever Nepal has adopted specific legislation for addressing the serious crime of caste-based discrimination and untouchability,” [noted](#) Jyoti Sanghera, who heads OHCHR-Nepal.

“It is now vital to ensure effective implementation of this law, taking appropriate measures such as raising awareness of the law amongst the general public and specific training for the police,” she added.

According to OHCHR and the National Dalit Commission, discrimination remains widespread in Nepal and has been blamed for the political, social and economic exclusion of millions of Nepalis on the basis of gender, caste, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and religion.

The two bodies have continued to record cases of physical assault, arson, forced displacement, sexual violence and labour exploitation resulting from caste-based discrimination.

Bijul Bishwakarma, the Chairperson of the Commission, said he hopes the passing of the new law will prove to be a milestone in access to justice for the Dalits, who have undergone extreme suffering due to caste-based discrimination and untouchability for centuries.

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