



NDC and OHCHR welcome the new law on Caste-based Discrimination and Untouchability

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Kathmandu – The National Dalit Commission (NDC) and the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner in Nepal (OHCHR-Nepal) welcome the passage of the Caste-based Discrimination and Untouchability (Crime and Punishment) bill on 24 May. Human rights defenders have been advocating for the passage of this draft bill that was pending before Parliament for the past two years.

The NDC and OHCHR are particularly pleased to note the provisions in the new Act stating that caste-based discrimination and untouchability practices are prohibited in both public and private spheres; increased punishments for public officials found responsible of discrimination; requirements for perpetrators to provide compensation to victims; and the criminalisation of incitement for caste-based discrimination.

The NDC and OHCHR recognise the passage of the bill as a positive step and hope that the legislation will be further strengthened in the implementation to address certain shortcomings, including the potential misuse of the provision that penalises complainants in cases where the complaints are not substantiated.

Mr. Bijul Bishwakarma, the Chairperson of the NDC says "I hope the passing of this bill will prove a milestone in access to justice for the Dalits, who have undergone extreme suffering due to caste based discrimination and untouchability for centuries". Jyoti Sanghera, Head of OHCHR-Nepal adds "This is the first time ever Nepal has adopted specific legislation for addressing the serious crime of caste-based discrimination and untouchability. 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".

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