

International Day against Racial Discrimination Celebrated in Nepal

On March 21, 1960, 69 black people were killed by the police at a peaceful demonstration in Sharpeville, South Africa, held to protest the apartheid "pass laws." In 1966, the United Nations decided to mark this day officially. Since then, on March 21, people around the world celebrate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

The Feminist Dalit Organization (FEDO) did not fail to celebrate the 46th International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. On this occasion, FEDO wanted to remind everyone about caste discrimination in Nepal, especially against Dalit people. Being born in a Dalit community continues to mean a life of stigmatization, poverty and exclusion for millions in the country, despite Nepal being a signatory of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

One more reason to take part in programs on this day was the upcoming Constitution. In fact, Nepal is waiting for the proclamation of its Constitution on May 28. It is thus a decisive and opportune moment to put pressure on the government through such events, to ensure the inclusion of Dalits' rights in the new Constitution.

In practical terms, a rally for Dalit rights in the streets of Kathmandu kicked off this International Day to highlight caste discrimination. Five hundred people left from Bhadrakali and went through the main streets of central Kathmandu. Political parties and various organizations participated in the rally with banners and slogans. Together, they urged that Dalit rights be included in the next Constitution. FEDO played a significant role in the rally by bringing together Dalit women from different women's groups from the Lalitpur and Kathmandu districts.

For the other part of the day, a program was organized by the National Dalit Commission. To begin the program, all those gathered were invited to observe one minute of silence in memory of the massacre of 1960. Representatives of various organizations, political parties and the Constituent Assembly then delivered speeches one by one. Every speaker urged all those concerned to abolish laws and practices that promote racial discrimination and to fight against caste-based discrimination.

As regards to FEDO, President Durga Sob reminded listeners of the non-presence of colorful discrimination in Nepal, but of caste discrimination. She drew attention to the essential need for unity in the Dalit community to reach our goals. A Dalit member of the Constituent Assembly, Subash Chandra Nembang, added that this caste discrimination should be eliminated in the upcoming Constitution. He made a commitment to address the important agenda of the Dalit community in the Constitutional Assembly. Furthermore, he said that caste-based discrimination is an inhuman act we should abolish not only on paper, but in practice as well.

The significant presence of the media at this program was a positive point towards spreading our message of equality and a just society to mainstream Nepali society.

(Feminist Dalit Organization (FEDO))