

Stigma and Untouchability: Root Causes and Manifestations of Caste-Based Human Rights Violations

IMADR, together with other NGOs, organized the side event “Stigma and Untouchability: Root Causes and Manifestations of Caste-Based Human Rights Violations” on September 12, 2012 during the 21st session of the UN Human Rights Council. The event aimed to draw attention to the stigma caused by caste-based discrimination and “untouchability”, and the interrelated human rights violations associated with these illegal, yet widespread practices. Issues that were discussed included forced and bonded labor, manual scavenging, the plight of Dalit women and children, and the exclusion of Dalits from access to basic services such as water and sanitation.

Two UN Special Rapporteurs were invited as keynote speakers - Ms. Catarina de Albuquerque as the Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, and Ms. Gulnara Shahinian as the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery. Three Dalit activists from India and Pakistan also delivered presentations about what is happening on the ground. Ms. Caroline O'Reilly from the International Labor Organization also gave input for the discussions that followed. UN experts and Dalit activists called for an end to caste-based stigma and slavery.

Meanwhile, in line with the report of the Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, IMADR submitted its written statement to the 21st session of the Human Rights Council with recommendations addressed to the governments of the countries affected by caste-based discrimination. The full text of the statement can be accessed.