



Contact: Mikuak Rai, Global Conference Mgr.  
Tel: (202) 276-3099  
Email: [gc.manager@icdrintl.org](mailto:gc.manager@icdrintl.org)

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## **ICDR Applauds President Obama for Raising Dalit Rights as Inherent Human Dignity**

Washington, D.C. (January 31, 2015) - International Commission for Dalit Rights' (ICDR) President Mr. DB Sagar applauded U.S. President Obama for recognizing Dalit Rights as the 'fundamental freedom and inherent dignity of (every) human being', and raising the issue of curbing Caste and Gender-based discrimination and inequality in India during his January 27 speech delivered at Siri Fort in New Delhi. President and Mrs. Obama were invited by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to attend India's Republic Day commemorations and parade, which honors the date on which the Constitution of India came into force on January 26, 1950.

During his speech addressing Indian government officials and dignitaries, Obama stated, "Together we can stand up against human trafficking and work to end the scourge of modern day slavery." He went on to say, "It's urgent that we begin this work right now ... Development that lifts up the lives and health of our people...Trade and economic partnerships that reduce poverty and create opportunity...Leadership in the world that defends our security, advances human dignity and protects our planet...That's what I believe that India and America can do together."

DB Sagar stated, "We welcome the President's influence on Indian people and Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi to grant respect and ensure the dignity of all individuals, and curb modern-day slavery." Caste segregation is still practiced against nearly 200 million Dalits, or Scheduled Castes/Tribes, across India today.

Mr. Sagar added, "Dalit people in India are the most tortured, marginalized, and exploited group in any country in the world. Dalit women and girls have faced extreme sexual and caste violence, and have been raped and murdered more than any other human beings; Dalit men and women are held in forced labor, discriminated in employment opportunities, and have received lower wages with life threatening work, more than any other group in India's growing economy. Impunity of communal or caste-persecutors is a serious challenge to honoring the human rights of Dalits everywhere."

Advancing the cause of Dalit peoples, Sagar continues, "We urge President Obama and Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi to endorse the draft UN Principles and Guidelines for the Effective Elimination of Discrimination based on Work and Descent, which were established by the UN Human Rights Council (A/HRC/11/CRP.3). And, we call upon President Obama to influence India Prime Minister Modi to ensure that US-India relations are grounded in respect for equality,



dignity, inclusion, and justice for all, appealing to President Obama to urge Prime Minister Modi to implement domestic and international laws and obligations, as well as support the passing of the U.S. House Resolution 566, “condemning Dalit *untouchability* (the practice of birth-descent discrimination against Dalit people) which is widely practiced in India, Nepal, the Asian diaspora, and other South Asian nations.”

Near the close of his address, Obama eloquently summed up, “So even as we live in a world of terrible inequality, we’re also proud to live in countries where the grandson of a cook can become President (referencing himself), where even a Dalit can help write a constitution (referencing Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, the Dalit-born principal architect of India’s Constitution), and even a tea-seller can become Prime Minister (referencing Prime Minister Modi).”

In the effort to promote Dalit Rights, ICDR and the Global Conference Organizing Committee (GCOC), consisting of more than a dozen Dalit and human rights advocacy groups, announce the **1<sup>st</sup> Global Conference on Defending Dalit Rights**, being held on the campus of Trinity Washington University in Washington, DC from March 19-21, 2015. The Global Conference has been designed to help achieve the full potential of the Dalit population, build a strong base of advocates and champions for Dalit Rights, and pursue the advancement and endorsement of the draft UN Principles and Guidelines and the passage by the U.S. Congress of a binding resolution to curb Caste-based discrimination, both nationally and globally.

The public is also invited and encouraged to attend the Human Chain demonstration on Saturday, March 21, 2015, the UN-recognized International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, coinciding with the Global Conference. Beginning at 1:30pm, in front of the White House, advocates and allies from various human rights and Dalit-focused organizations are being called to stand in solidarity with Dalit people worldwide, joining together and demonstrating the urgent need for justice, dignity, equality, and humanity for all. During this action, the Global Conference strategy and Declaration of Dalit Rights will be announced publicly.

For more information, and to register for the Global Conference on Defending Dalit Rights, please visit [www.ICDRINTL.org](http://www.ICDRINTL.org). For media inquiries, please contact Mikuak Rai, Global Conference Manager, via email at [gc.manager@icdrintl.org](mailto:gc.manager@icdrintl.org).

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