

**ICDR and Civil Rights groups demand *Department of Justice* to recognize and enforce
Caste as already covered by Civil Rights Laws**

August 20, 2021

WASHINGTON, The International Commission for Dalit Rights (ICDR International), together with the National Coalition Against Caste Discrimination and other civil rights groups, submitted a *policy memo* demanding the U.S. Department of Justice recognize that civil rights laws prohibit caste-based discrimination in the United States and integrate and enforce this recognition into civil rights and non-discrimination guidelines. Principally, caste-based discrimination is covered as a protected grounds under Title VII because it is a type of ancestry discrimination that is covered by the proper interpretation of the term “race.”

The National Coalition also requested the Civil Rights Division of the Department Justice to provide applicable guidance to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in support of the memorandum to recognize the intertwined nature of caste and race and include “caste-based discrimination” in EEOC compliance and policies.

Indeed, caste-based discrimination exists and flourishes in the United States. According to the Census Bureau, in 2018, there were more than 5.6 million South Asians in the United States.¹ Workplace caste-based discrimination is most likely to occur among this population. A recent report has revealed that there are more than 250 complaints of caste-based discrimination from employees in major multinational companies. These reports expose cases of verbal and physical assault, workplace discrimination, sexual harassment, and caste slurs. Every day, on a covert basis, many vulnerable members of American society face caste-based discrimination that must be addressed by the U.S. legal system.

Congress has already recognized that caste-based discrimination exists and is unacceptable in the United States. In 2007, the 110th Congress (2007-2008) passed the historic House Concurrent Resolution (H.Con.Res.139), “expressing that ‘caste-based discrimination’ is unacceptable and the U.S. is committed to eliminating it and ensuring that qualified Dalits are not discouraged from working with the U.S. government or U.S. organizations.”

We strongly believe that failing to recognize and enforce caste-based discrimination as a form of discrimination severely undermines the Department of Justice commitment to uphold the civil rights and constitutional rights of all Americans, particularly some of the most vulnerable members of our society. They also urged the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice to examine caste-based discrimination in the U.S. Caste-based discrimination and harassment are an urgent contemporary U.S. civil rights and social justice issue, especially in the workplace.

###

¹ US Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, Asian Alone or in any Combination by Selected Groups, 2018, <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=B02018&tid=ACSDT1Y2019.B02018&hidePreview=true>