

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1103/04
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to the Council

Subject: Caste discrimination

Caste based discrimination affects more than 260 million people worldwide. Caste communities live in physical and social segregation, face gross injustice before the law and have limited access to land, employment, education and health care. The UN Special Rapporteur on Racism stated in his follow-up to the World Conference against Racism that this issue "should be given priority in the follow-up to the Durban Conference, in the fight against all forms of discrimination and the promotion of human rights worldwide."

Recommendations for action to counter caste discrimination have been made at EU level mainly through the European Parliament's resolutions on human rights in the world and its recommendations to UN Commission on Human Rights sessions. In contrast, it seems that no action has been taken by the Council to enhance the political and human rights dialogue with caste afflicted countries on the issue of the continued practice of caste discrimination. Analyses of caste based discrimination are yet to be included in the annual EU human rights report. Effectiveness of the EU's human rights policy in terms of addressing caste discrimination still remains to be assessed.

Given this continued gross violation of human rights:

What actions and measures have the Council set in place to respond to the continued dehumanising practice of caste discrimination?

What steps have been taken to promote the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on caste discrimination?

Can the Council ensure that Member States strongly support initiatives to promote and enhance the fight against caste discrimination?

What steps can be taken by the Council to ensure that references to this enormous human rights problem together with suggestions for remedial measures are made in all relevant EU-India statements?

Will caste discrimination be included as an agenda item at forthcoming EU-India summits?