

'India ignoring UN's recommendations to curb violence against women'

India is ignoring the recommendations made by the United Nations on issues of discrimination and violence against women, experts said here Tuesday.

They said the UN's Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) submitted a report to Indian government July 18, 2014, with recommendations in the areas where government needs to strengthen and amend the laws on discrimination and violence against women. But, the Indian government instead of incorporating the changes and amending the laws raised questions on the recommendations.

The experts were speaking at a media briefing on the "recommendations made by the CEDAW on discrimination and violence against women in India".

"Even when there is a steep rise in the number of crimes against women despite having laws relating to sexual violence, there is little visible impact of the laws at societal and institutional levels. Victim blaming, patriarchal gender stereotypes, institutional apathy and police inaction continue to foster impunity for violence against women," said Vrinda Grover, lawyer, human rights and women's rights activist.

"There is a lack of understanding of the basic issues that can improve the situation of discrimination and violence against women in the country. Though Rashida Manjoo, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women (UN SRVAW), presented the report to the UN Human Rights Council out of which the recommendations were made, the way India has responded is extremely shameful," she said.

Among various measures the CEDAW has suggested that India should set up one-stop centers providing women and girls victims of violence and rape with free and immediate access to medical attentions, psychological counseling and legal aid.

The UN body has also recommended changes in the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) so that sexual violence against women perpetrated by members of the armed force can be brought under the purview of the ordinary criminal law, and also remove the requirement of the government permission to prosecute members of the armed forces against the sexual crime.

The recommendations also include - inclusion of women in peace negotiations in the north eastern states, amendment in the Section 19 of the Protection of Human Rights Act and conferring powers to the NHRC to investigate cases against armed force personnel currently not allowed by AFSPA, especially cases of violence against women.

"The Indian government is not even willing to listen to the recommendations made regarding handling the caste-related crimes against women," said Asha Kotwal, General Secretary of All India Dalit Mahila Adhikar Manch.

"There is an urgent need for the country to address the issues related to crime against women, or else the day is not far, when India will become the most unsafe place for the women," she said.

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