

Voices from the South

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THE
KARIBU
FOUNDATION

SHAPING A NEW WORLD

Statement from the South Asia School of Human Rights

The following includes passages from the final declaration of the South Asia School of Human Rights, an education and advocacy initiative of the Student Christian Movement of India (SCMI). The school took place in Bangalore, India over a 9-day period in July 2012.

We, the participants from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka, gathered for the South Asia School of Human Rights, deliberated on the theme “*Shaping Young Human Right Defenders for South Asia*” and do hereby give this declaration.

We are aggrieved at the intensity of human rights violation in South Asian Countries and its grievous impact on the lives of people. We are angered by the issues of war, kidnapping, disappearance, child labour, human trafficking, prostitution, caste politics, discrimination, communal violence, religious fundamentalism, migration/refugees, armed forces power

and atrocities, gender disparity and many more leading to untold loss of lives.

We, young defenders of Human Rights, acknowledge that many people try to forge a way of life which integrates the best of tradition and modernity but deviates from the meaning of considering ourselves as human being. We tend to focus on external goals—money, status, power and possessions, with least consideration for the very life of individuals and creation.

Although South Asian countries profess to be democratic countries, there is inequality, injustice, insecurity, power hierarchy, oppression and Human Rights violations are everywhere. Our faith in Jesus Christ as the defender of Human Right inspires us to speak for Justice and inclusive rights for all.

Today, more than ever, Human Rights have become a universal concern and cannot be gazed upon with misty eyes, for we discern human rights as a faith issue and thereby dedicate ourselves to be the Young Human Rights

“We discern human rights as a faith issue and thereby dedicate ourselves to be the Young Human Rights Defenders.”

Defenders.

We express that:

- A country cannot be called great by its geography, military strength, its natural resources, and its technology alone. Its greatness lies when equality, peace, justice, dignity and inclusivity flows like an ever flowing stream. It becomes great when the State and its citizens realises and understands their civic responsibilities and duties in the state, of which is to treat everyone equal respecting and affirming each others’ rights. When we accept one another for *who we are* and not divide ourselves on *what we are*, then we can lift our heads and be proud to call ourselves as citizens of the world.

We affirm that:

- Human Rights are indispensable rights that are guaranteed to every individual simply because one is human and for respect of every individual’s dignity. They are universal for all, irrespective of gender, identity, caste, class, colour, status, etc.

- All human beings have the right to enjoy and

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The Student Christian Movement of India (SCMI) is an ecumenical youth organization that aims to motivate the student community to develop leadership skills for transformative action in society. For more information, visit:

<http://www.scmindia.org/>



exercise the rights that are defined in *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* without any discrimination. Therefore, every human being must work to protect and promote the rights of all people as much as one protects one's self.

- God's preferential option for the poor, the captives, the blind and the oppressed is clearly exemplified in the life and witness of Jesus Christ. Jesus, the Son of Man has a preferential option for those who are in the margins and are victims of power structures and dominations. We affirm our faith Jesus Christ as the liberator and take inspirations to stand up for human rights.

- Women's aspiration for freedom of choice, expression, movements, struggle against gender oppression and unjust social structure are all part of a search for fuller Human rights. Women's Rights are Human Rights.

- Children are God's creation and they need love, warmth and food to grow as a responsible citizen for tomorrow. Education is a right for every child to empower them with the knowledge.

- Advocacy is essential to promote human rights and reinforce capacity

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building. Dialogue with Government and NGO's in meeting, training session can be the opportunities for human rights advocacy.

We oppose:

- The denial of basic Human Rights to people on the basis of caste, class, gender, status, colour, etc.

- The use of Armed Forces Special Power Acts and war crimes, for many innocent people are being killed and Human Rights violated.

- The confinement of women to their homes, the stereotype division of labour between women and men, the subjugation of women by the patriarchal society.

- Child trafficking, child labour, slavery, prostitution and the structures which make children and women vulnerable to atrocities and harassment.

- The discrimination of Dalit and other marginalised communities by the dominant caste.

- Theories and practices based on “Might is Right” and the “Survival of the Fittest” concept which degenerates the condition of the vulnerable communities, pushing them further away into the margins and the peripheries.

- The displacement of Tribals from their land and livelihood in order to pave way for technological development.

- The loss of human lives along with destruction of ecology due to use of deadly atomic bombs and weapons.

- Any forces that keep people silent from exercising their rights.

To this end, we pledge:

- To stand united and connected beyond borders as we disperse to our respective countries.

- To be actively involved in organisations/institutions that work to promote human dignity, that work for women's rights, child's care, oppressed caste and work towards promotion of fuller humanity.

- To educate the people on the rights they have as human beings, and mobilise them to stand united against all forms of discrimination and oppressions.

- To be active defenders of human rights whenever and wherever the rights of a fellow human being is violated.

- To urge upon the state to protect people from violence and discrimination so that all enjoy social, economic, and political rights in practice, to promote channels to provide effective understanding of universal rights, and to implement rights, freedom and teachings of human rights at all levels.

“Give to every Human being every right that you claim for yourself.”

To read the statement in full, and the learn more about the initiative, visit <http://karibu.no/viewstories.asp?id=155>