

## **Report of the DHARNA on the Issue of Granting Scheduled Caste Status to Dalit Christians**

held on 24.02.2009, New Delhi

In collaboration with Catholic Bishop's Conference of India (CBCI) and National Council of Churches of India (NCCI), National Council of Dalit Christians (NCDC) organised a Rally and Dharna at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi. With more than 1,000 participants, the rally started at 9.30 am on 24th Feb 2009, from Kerala house raising slogans in different languages, demanding the Central Government to act immediately to give a reply in the Supreme Court and to introduce the Bill in the Parliament.

Many political and civil leaders, bishops, priests, religious and a large number of people from various Dalit movements and Christian institutions from different States took active part in the Dharna.

A good number of Jesuits and their collaborators particularly from Southern Provinces and the staff and students from Vidya Jyothi took active part in the rally and dharna to show our solidarity with Dalit Christians.

Many dignitaries like the Archbishops of Delhi, Ahmedabad, Chennai and Madurai, and political leaders like Mr. Raja (CPI), Mrs. Brinda Karat (CPI-M) and Mr. Thomas an MP from Kerala spoke on the occasion demanding the Central government to implement the Report of Justice Renganath Misra Commission.

The following demands were made to the Central Government:

1. Make public the Report of the Justice Renganath Misra Commission
2. Implement the recommendations of the Justice Renganath Misra Commission
3. Give appropriate answer to the query of the Supreme Court to the Writ Petitions demanding Scheduled Caste Status to Dalit Christians
4. Delete the unjust para 3 of the Constitution, the Scheduled Caste order 1950
5. Grant Scheduled Caste Status to Christians of Scheduled Caste origin.

The Misra Commission, which was set by the government to study the socio-economic and educational status of Dalit Christians, recommended extending the reservation to all Dalits irrespective of religion. "All the political parties except BJP have supported the demand of SC Christians," the organisers said, urging the government to "act immediately to give a reply in the Supreme Court and to introduce the Bill in the Parliament."

"Any delay would be a betrayal on the part of the government and we would respond appropriately in the forthcoming General Election to the Parliament," they said.

Report prepared by Jebamalai Raja

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