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Government to sanction 100 doctors for performing selective abortion and female foeticide

AsiaNews (18.02.2013) - India's central government has identified about a hundred doctors who will be sanctioned for carrying out selective abortions and female foeticides in the country.

The Health Ministry sent the Medical Council of India a list of doctors who violated the 1994 Pre-conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act, which bans prenatal sex determination tests and imposes sentences of six months to five years on violators, plus the suspension or cancellation of their medical license.

This is a positive step, Dr Pascoal Carvalho told *AsiaNews*, because "using strong deterrence measures can help prevent similar forms of discrimination and punish the guilty."

According to the [*Children in India 2012: A Statistical Appraisal*](#), a study released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, at least three million girls were missing in 2011 as a result of selective abortions and female foeticide.

"This loss will have serious moral, social and economic consequences," said Dr Carvalho, who is a member of the Pontifical Academy for Life. "Choosing the sex [of newborns] is an expression of the lack of respect for women, and one of the causes of rising crimes against them."

Sadly, "in India, boys are preferred to girls for cultural reasons and this is connected to economic factors," he explained.

Traditionally, girls are educated and raised to become wives, but they can get married only if they bring a dowry (money, jewels and various material goods). Even when they get married, women have to give birth to a boy to earn respect.

In addition, in some regions of India, the practice of *sati* still occurs, whereby widows are expected to throw themselves on their husbands' funeral pyre. Hindu tradition requires women to show devotion to their dead husbands through voluntary self-immolation, a practice that allows families to rid themselves of women who have become an economic burden.

A widespread 'culture of death' underlies "selective abortions and female foeticides," Dr Carvalho noted. "The Catholic Church instead promotes a culture of life through its

educational and health ministries. This way, it protects the life and dignity of girls as well as defends, values and encourage young women and opposes all forms of discrimination and violation of their rights."

What is more and contrary to widespread belief, selective abortion and female foeticide are also commonplace among middle and upper class Indians. "A study titled *Skewed Sex Ratios in India: Physician, Heal Thyself* found that there are more boys than girls in the families of medical doctors," Dr Carvalho noted.

What is the value of rights without justice?

Asian Human Rights Commission (10.12.2012) - Concepts of equality, dignity and justice are fundamental to realising human rights irrespective of jurisdictions. Universally recognised as yardsticks to measure the probity in realising human rights in a country, and guaranteed to every Indian by the Constitution of India, these normative and essential prescriptions of a justice design is experienced far below the expected threshold in India since the past three decades. There were no visible signs of significant improvements this year in India, made to the functioning of institutions required to guarantee these basic aspects critical to ensure human rights to every Indian. On the contrary, what was experienced is the intentional distancing of these indispensable guarantees to a large section of the population, numbering into millions of individuals, who refer to India as home, the second most populous country in the world.

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) has released today a detailed analysis of the human rights situation in India, marking the International Human Rights Day. This report is available at <http://www.humanrights.asia/resources/hrreport/2012/ahrc-spr-005-2012.pdf/view>

The AHRC over the past 12 months has reported cases, meticulously documented, of human rights abuses from India. This includes cases of brutal forms of custodial torture; extrajudicial executions; caste, gender and other forms of inhuman discrimination; deaths from acute starvation and malnutrition - of women, children and the aged; and of forced displacement and denial of livelihood options to thousands of Indians. Adding fire to the ordeal, of what is termed as life in India, are illustrations of brute and criminal suppression of the freedom of expression and opinion for which the criminal justice process and the state's privileged authority were intentionally misused, to the extent that today the country has fallen far below by comparison to many other democracies of the world in terms of the freedom of expression and opinion indices. Thrown further into the melee is widespread corruption in all its cognate expressions at all tiers of the administration, that today it is hard to believe that the country is a democratic, socialist, republic as originally conceived.

While it is true that despite a global economic recession, the country has moved forward without being much hurt financially, the chasm between the classical 'haves and have-nots' has deepened and widened further this year, that today, to breach this gap, the government, irrespective of its political colour, will have to work overtime, focusing on improving the overall justice framework in India. This is because, as of now, the very notion of justice has reduced to become selectively accessible to a limited few in the country, negating in the process, the very idea of justice. In that the fruits of economic development is placed as reserved for a minority in India, rendering the concept and modus of development itself as an open warrant for exploitation by a minority of the majority. This must end.

Key to addressing these issues in India are: (i) criminal justice reforms, including the

complete overhauling of the police, most importantly bringing about an advanced legislation criminalising torture that is capable to redefine the role of Indian police into one that fits the expectations and demands of a democratic state; (ii) enacting and meticulously implementing legislations that can chisel transparency and accountability upon the face of state institutions and on the complicated network of bureaucracy that runs these institutions; (iii) opening up avenues for consultation and discussions, so that administrative and all other state policies are no more approached through a top-down method but are those that reflect people's needs and demands, giving priority to protecting all fundamental freedoms so that the belief in ownership of rights and freedoms are rekindled in the people; and (iv) the repealing of draconian legislations like the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act or the Madhya Pradesh State Security Act.

The government should stop playing the catch-up role with administrative reforms that has happened across the world, in more developed countries. Given the resources and potential the country has, Indians, irrespective of the region, language, religion or ethnicity deserve much more than what is today offered to them. Central to the realisation of advanced living conditions is the equal ability of every Indian to enjoy all fundamental freedoms. For this, it is elementary that the overall justice framework in India should improve. Even the smallest improvement India could achieve on this front will have an immediate positive impact in other countries in Asia and globally. It will further legitimise India's moral authority upon global issues, that today it lacks miserably.

Today, when the world celebrates the International Day to respect all human freedoms, perhaps resolving and working towards making India a better place to live for all those who call India home could be the best thing that Indians and their government could consider a mission worth embarking upon. The AHRC hopes that in the months to come the country will wake up from its slumber and that a report to be prepared in 2013 on a similar occasion would have many positive aspects of improvements in India to speak about.

Film on gendercide at the European Parliament calls for end to the killing of girls in India and China

By Elisa Van Ruiten for *Human Rights Without Frontiers*

HRWF (09.11.2012) - The United Nations estimates that as many as 200 million girls worldwide have gone missing and frequently aborted, killed or abandoned just because they were born girls. Organisers of a global campaign to end what they have termed "gendercide" say that the three deadliest words that are pronounced in the world today are these: "It's a girl."

"It's a girl" is also the title of a documentary film that is presently being screened in many countries. On 6th November, Irish MEP Gay Mitchell hosted a viewing of the film at the European Parliament, followed by a discussion with the film's director, Evan Grae Davis, and Reggie Littlejohn, President of Women's Rights Without Frontiers, a member association of Human Right Without Frontiers Int'l..

The documentary gives particular attention to female feticide and infanticide in India and China, where sons are typically considered to have higher value than daughters.

In India, families customarily give their daughter in marriage in exchange for a dowry, given to the husband's family. The birth of a son is therefore more valued than a daughter, as this can bring the bride's family more wealth. In other words, girls are born

an economic burden to the family. Although the Indian government has outlawed the dowry system, it is still widely practiced with impunity. Dowries can require large sums of money of poor families, making sons much more desirable than girls. If a foetus is determined through an ultrasound test to be female, there is a high likelihood of an abortion. Others will kill their baby girls at birth through strangulation, poisoning or other methods.

China's One Child Policy is tracked through State Family Planning agencies and enforced by special government police units. Couples who live in urban centres are allowed only one child, whereas rural families may have two – if the first one was a girl, offering the family another chance to birth a son. When this rule is violated, forced abortion and sterilization frequently result. Children that escape this fate have no legal status in Chinese society, barring them from citizenship and the benefits thereof. These policies have resulted in a grossly disproportionate ratio of men to women, contributing to the trafficking of female children.

Producers of the film hope to draw greater attention to the tragedy of gendercide in our world today and to advocate for an end to these egregious practices. See www.ItsAGirlMovie.com for ways to become involved.

WRWF's Reggie Littlejohn challenges UNFPA and IPPF at European Parliament

WRWF (06.11.2012) - Women's Rights Without Frontiers President Reggie Littlejohn co-presented the feature-length documentary, "It's a Girl," at the European Parliament, together with the film's director, Evan Grae-Davis. Littlejohn is featured as an expert on China's One Child Policy in this powerful new documentary exposing gendercide and forced abortion. The event, hosted by MEP Gay Mitchell packed the auditorium.

According to one UN expert, up to 200 million women are missing in the world today due to the sex-selective abortion of baby girls. In China, moreover, the government forcibly aborts women who become pregnant in violation of the One Child Policy, up to the ninth month of pregnancy.

In response to a question about what the European Parliament can do to address this violence against women, Littlejohn raised the issue of the funding of UNFPA and International Planned Parenthood (IPPF).

Littlejohn praised the European Parliament for recently passing a resolution that "strongly condemns . . . the practice of forced abortions and sterilizations globally, especially in the context of the one-child policy." The resolution further states that "the EU has provided, and still provides, funds for organizations involved in family planning policies in China," and "urges the Commission to ensure that its funding of projects does not breach" the European Parliament's commitment against coercive population control.

Littlejohn stated, "It is significant that the European Parliament has urged the Commission to ensure that this funding is not associated with coercion. For decades, the UNFPA and International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) have worked hand in hand with the Chinese population control machine, which is coercive. They are funded by many nations, not only in Europe but the world over, including the United States. I have no doubt that any unbiased investigation by the European Parliament or any other governmental body will reveal that these organizations are complicit with coercive family planning in China."

In addition, Women's Rights Without Frontiers just launched a campaign to end gendercide and forced abortion in China. Littlejohn said, "We are saving lives in China, one baby girl at a time." WRWF's "Save a Girl" campaign has been adopted by the "It's a Girl" film as its official Action Plan for China.

Causes.com End Gendercide and Forced Abortion in China

<http://www.causes.com/causes/792226-women-s-rights-without-frontiers>

Check out how you can see the "It's a Girl" film here.

<http://www.itsagirlmovie.com/>

Reggie Littlejohn, President

Women's Rights Without Frontiers

www.womensrightswithoutfrontiers.org

Stop Forced Abortion – China's War on Women! Video (4 mins)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=JjtuBcJUsjY
