

CELEBRATING HUMAN RIGHTS 2022

Observation of Human Rights Day 2022 in Andhra Pradesh, India

In a world of technology revolution and internet boom that connects people faster, never before in the history of mankind, the platform of social media has become a 'battle field' for hate speeches where vulgarity is exchanged and at times openly people challenge each other for their personal interests without understanding the spirituality of diversity. Seeds of hatred are sown to feed the ego. The revolution in technology is increasingly used, more for battle than for peace. Funds are even raised in different corners to feed the mind to inflict violence between people of different faiths. Religious freedom is at stake. Leaders who are supposed to promote peace have turned out to be promoters of war that is disturbing mankind. Around the world, including India, some form of genocide, racism, discrimination in the name of caste, class, colour and gender, persecution, extermination – all are being promoted today more than ever. In a world of disturbance, the International Human Rights Day becomes a time to reflect and act upon respecting each other and working for peace and harmony.

The International Human Rights Day marks the anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The Declaration was a beacon of light after one of the darkest episodes of human history. It brought the shattered world together to commit to human rights as the basis for building a brighter future. On this anniversary, the Sisters of the Good Shepherd working among the people at the margins in Amaravathi and Mangalagiri, Andhra Pradesh, India in association with their Partners-in-Mission, Sisters of other Congregations, Government Officials, members of Non-government Organisations and Children from the Schools/Training Institutions came together on 9th and 10th December both in Amaravathi Town and Guntur District Headquarters respectively to renew their commitment to human rights. A series of events were organised on the theme 'Dignity, Freedom and Justice for All' to express their disregard and contempt for human rights violation happening again in different forms. As the countdown to the Declaration's 75th anniversary in 2023 begins, the Sisters of the Good Shepherd and their Partners-in-Mission commit to working for dignity, freedom and justice for all.

Special Features of the International Human Rights Day Celebrations

The two-day long observation of the International Human Rights Day includes 4 major events organised in different places to cover a larger community.

DAY 1: 9th December 2022

1. Rally on Human Rights: On 9th December 2022, the Sisters of the Good Shepherd from Amaravathi invited the Adolescent Girls and Boys for a rally that took place in Amaravathi town between 11 am and 12.30 pm. School Dropout Adolescent Girls studying at Good Shepherd Computer and Spoken English Centre and the Girls and Boys studying at AP Government Balayogi

Gurukul Pathasala, St. Augustine English Medium School (CBSE) and students of both sexes studying at Pallotti Junior College, Amaravathi participated in the Human Rights Rally. More than 350 of them participated in the rally.

Apart from the Girls and Youth, Rev. Fr. G. Bhaskar, Parish Priest of Amaravathi, Sisters of St. Augustine, the Teaching and the Non-Teaching Community from different Schools located in Amaravathi and the Police Officials participated.

During the rally, slogans were raised to condemn certain human rights related issues and problems prevalent in the region. For the participants as well as for the spectators it was a learning point to reflect and take action against human rights violence.

2. Regional-level Public Meeting on International Human Rights Day: Soon after the rally, a public meeting was organised for the women and girls from the villages and towns. Mr. Justice Rathnakumar, Secretary, State Human Rights Commission, Mrs. Indira, Child Development Project Officer (CDPO) of Women & Child Welfare Department, Tadikonda Region, Mr. Venkateshwaralu, DISHA Police Officer, Mr. Allu Reddy, Inspector for Anti Trafficking Unit, Palnadu District, Sr. Deanna Pereira, Counsellor for Women & Children at Good Shepherd Convent, Amaravathi, Sr. Vinnarasi, Director of Good Shepherd Convent, Amaravathi, Mr. Sameer, CHILDLINE Programme Coordinator, and several others shared their point of views with reference to human rights. As many as 250 women and adolescent girls participated.

The special invitees in their speeches covered topics such as the special features spelt out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), national-level systems and procedures for reporting human rights violence such as the State/National Human Rights Commissions, Constitutional Safeguard Measures and specific laws that are available pertinent to human rights, on-going incidences of violence human rights and the means of addressing them.

DAY 2: 10th December 2022

3. District-level Public Meeting on International Human Rights Day: This was organised jointly by Sisters of Good Shepherd in Amaravathi and Mangalagiri in partnership with Department of Women & Child Welfare, Andhra Pradesh, and Child Rights Advocacy Foundation (CRAF), a body that advocates the rights of children across the State of Andhra Pradesh. This meeting took place in the presence of Mr. M. Venu Gopal Reddy, I.A.S., District Collector of Guntur District, Mr. Justice Mr. K. Rathnakumar, Secretary of DLSA cum Senior Civil Judge, Guntur District, Mrs. Manoranjini, Project Director of Women and Child Welfare Department, Andhra Pradesh and many others. As many as 400 participants from various institutions,

non-governmental organisations and Officials from the Department of Women and Children Welfare (AP) were present to deliberate on the salient features of Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the relevance of State and National-level Human Rights Commissions and its focus on ensuring one's basic rights, rights to life, equality, liberty, and dignity.

The event was marked by thematic speeches and the cultural programmes by the girl children from different educational institutions. For the participants it was a day of enlightenment on the nuances of the human rights.

- 4. Village-level Human Rights Education for the Adolescent Girls:** Soon after the district-level programme in Guntur, Sisters of the Good Shepherd and their Partners-in-Mission met with a group of adolescent girls in Tadikonda village to orient them on the relevance of observation of Human Rights Day along with orientation on life skills. As many as 42 girls attended the programme and benefitted.

Key Messages Shared in the Regional & District-level Public Meetings

- ✚ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) consists of a preamble and 30 articles that set out in a broad range of fundamental human rights and freedom to which all of us, everywhere around the world, are entitled. It guarantees our rights without distinction of nationality, place of residence, gender, national or ethnic origin, religion, language, or any other status.
- ✚ The International Human Rights referred in the historical Declaration include rights to life, equality, liberty, and dignity which are guaranteed by the constitution.
- ✚ In India the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), a statutory public body, was constituted on 12th October 1993 under the Protection of Human Rights Ordinance of 28 September 1993. Under this initiative, an Indian citizen can make a human rights-related complaint without any fee directly to NHRC either by post (NHRC, Manav Adhikar Bhawan, Block-C, GPO Complex, INA, New Delhi - 110023) or through website www.nhrc.nic.in
- ✚ Unlawful detention, false implication, custodial violence, illegal arrests, encounter deaths, custodial deaths in police/prison custody, practice of bonded labour, Child labour, Child marriage, harassment of prisoners, non-registration of complaints on denial of care by the kith and kin of older persons, human trafficking, abduction, sexual assault, murder or attempt thereof, corruption or any such criminal offence which is punishable under law, inaction on measures or denial thereof to provide basic civic amenities like drinking water, clean environment, health facilities, communication and transport, right to education, ration under Public Distribution system, right to food including malnutrition and starvation deaths and benefits under

various social welfare schemes, rights of the disabled and displacement on account of mega projects and environmental pollution, Inaction on complaints on issues, which require preventive action to check unlawful activity, communal violence, public unrest, law & order situation from deterioration, atrocities on SCs and STs and denial of their dues under social welfare schemes - all such incidences of human rights violations continue to happen. Hence, there is a need to educate people about the systems and procedure existing for reporting and supportive action in favour of victims.

- ✚ In practice, due to the ignorance of the public on the existence of NHRC at the national and state levels, not all cases of human rights violations are reported in India. Hence, there is a strong need to create awareness among the public about the existence of NHRC in India.
- ✚ Incidents of human rights violations which happened more than a year ago will not be ordinarily entertained by NHRC. Hence, victims of human rights violence need to report as early as possible.
- ✚ The interconnectedness of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Constitution of India, laws pertaining Human Rights must be understood in order to propagate and utilise the same for protecting and promoting human rights.
- ✚ Due to Government and Non-Government initiatives, the issues related to child labour was well addressed in India to the maximum. Thanks to Vigilance Committees in each district that were formed they have done their best to put an end to child labour practices. Similarly, child marriages need to be stopped and the rights of girl children must be protected and promoted. India has good supportive system which needs to be utilised to safeguard the rights of children and protect them from all forms of abuses.
- ✚ Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) is gender-neutral and prioritises the child's best interests at all stages to guarantee that the child's physical, emotional, intellectual, and social development are all healthy. It differentiates between many sorts of sexual abuse, such as penetrative and non-penetrative assault, sexual harassment, and pornography. It insists on stringent imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to five years with a fine. If a person is a repeated offender, such imprisonment may be extended to seven years with a fine.
- ✚ Human rights education should be made as a fundamental, core aspect of every school and college curriculum. This will help in shaping children's attitudes, ideas and character.
- ✚ In case of human rights violation, the women should be encouraged to report cases to appropriate authorities. If the offenders are punished, it will create

fear among the offenders and the incidences of violence too will thus be reduced.

Gratitude

Sisters of the Good Shepherd take this opportunity to thank their Partners-in-Mission for meticulously organising the events. It is time also to thank the Officials from different Government Departments, Heads and Representatives from the Non-Government Organisations, Educational Institutions, Women and Children from the Villages and Towns for expressing their solidarity in participating and contributing towards the successful execution of events. Above all, it is appropriate to thank the organisations such as MISSIO, Austria and Sisters of the Good Shepherd, Toronto for their contribution without which these development initiatives would not have materialised.

Conclusion

“I like the religion that teaches liberty, equality and fraternity”, says Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, the brain of the Constitution of India.

As a conclusion, hereby listed are the key points in the UNHR Declaration:

- Every man, woman and child on earth is born free and equal in dignity and rights.
- We are brothers and sisters of this world and we have reason and conscience and should be friendly towards one another.
- Everyone is entitled to the rights set forth in THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS regardless of age, sex, race, religion, politics, colour, nationality, wealth, language, beliefs, birthplace, traditions, economics, weight, skin, style, thoughts, feelings, hairstyle, differences, size, lifestyle, height, preference, and orientation.
- Every one of us have the right to freedom, and safety. Nobody has the right to treat you as their slave, or torture you.
- The law is the same for everyone.
- Every one of us have the right to legal protection.
- Every one of us have the right to a fair and public trial.
- No one shall be arrested or put in jail for exiled without good reason.
- You are innocent until proven guilty.
- You have the right to privacy.
- You have the right to move throughout the world.
- You have the right to enjoy freedom from persecution in other countries.
- You have the right to a nationality.
- You have the right to marry and have a family.
- You have the right to be protected by your government.
- You have the right to own a property and possessions.
- You have the right to think what you want and say what you like.
- You have the right to practice your religion freely and organise peacefully.
- You have the right to take part in your country’s political affairs.

- Governments should be voted regularly and all votes are equally considered.
- The society in which you live should help you to develop.
- You have the right to work for a fair salary and each workday should not be too long.
- You have the right to expect a decent standard of living.
- You have the right to go to school; education should strive to promote peace and understanding among all people.
- Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.
- You must respect the social order that are necessary for these rights to be available.
- You must respect the rights of others, the community and public property.
- Nobody you shall attempt in any way to destroy the rights set forth in THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

‘Protecting and Promoting Human Rights’ is everyone’s subject and the responsibility of each one. Becoming aware of the nuances will help in transforming mankind into a humane society. When we open our mind and check ourselves whether we are following the spirituality behind this UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, then, it will help us to correct our pathways in life, shape our attitudes and become an instrument of peace and harmony. If the transformation were to take place in us, the Universe and its Creator also will be happy.

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PHOTOGRAPHS of HUMAN RIGHTS DAY 2022



Rally for Promoting Human Rights jointly flagged off by Rev.Fr. G. Baskar, Parish Priest of Amaravathi and Mr. Allu Reddy, Inspector of Police, District Anti-human Trafficking Unit, Palnadu District



The Human Rights Rally was taken to the main streets of Amaravathi town to commemorate the Declaration of Human Rights and educate the public on rights relating to life, liberty, equality & dignity



Adolescent Girl Children from Amaravathi-based St. Augustine English Medium School, AP Government Balayogi Gurukul Pathasala, and students from Pallotti Junior College attend the Human Rights Rally



Officials from Department of Police, Amaravathi actively participate in the Human Rights Rally



A view of the section of children participating in the Human Rights Rally



Sisters of St. Augustine participate in the Human Rights Rally along with their school children



Students from St. Augustine English Medium School, Amaravathi participate in the Human Rights Rally



Girls from AP Government Balayogi Gurukul Pathasala participate in the Human Rights Rally



Women and Adolescent Girls register themselves for attending the public meeting on Human Rights in commemoration of the 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights'



Registration of participants for the Public Meeting in the premises of Good Shepherd Convent



Mr. Laxman, Programme Coordinator of Economic Justice Project facilitated by Sisters of Good Shepherd Convent plays the role of Master of Ceremony for the Public Meeting on the Human Rights Day



Since incidences of human rights violence continue to persist in our country, there is a strong need to create an awareness among the public on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and also the Constitutional Guarantees for a better society, says Mrs. Indira, Child Development Project Officer (CDPO) of Women & Child Welfare Department, Tadikonda Region



"If an individual / group violates the other person's/group's rights relating to life, liberty, equality or dignity, then, the victim/s can approach the State/National Human Rights Commission for taking action" says Mr.K. Rathnakumar, Secretary cum Senior Civil Judge, Guntur District



"When violence was inflicted on women by their menfolk, because of their attitude of compassion, they withdraw the cases filed against their counterparts. Such an attitude gives way for the menfolk to inflict violence on women" says Mr. Venketeswarlu, Sub-Inspector of Police (Trafficking), Amaravathi



"All children have human rights, just as adults do"
 says Mr. Sameer, Good Shepherd CHILDLINE Coordinator, Guntur (Urban)



"We, the women, should come together when our complaints are not taken into consideration seriously for inquiry at the Police Stations"
 says Sr. Deanna, Counsellor for Women and Children Programme, Good Shepherd Convent, Amaravati



"It is the responsibility of every citizen to stop the practice of child marriage"
 says Sr. Vinnarasi, Director of Good Shepherd Convent (Amaravathi)



Mr. Ravi Shekar, Rtd. Officer from the Department of Electricity reminded the public saying that it was Dr Ambedkar, the Architect of India, with a futuristic mind, who broke the caste system in the Constitution and gave equal rights to all Indians"



Sisters of the Good Shepherd express their respect and honour to Mr. K. Ratna Kumar, Secretary, DLISA, Guntur for his contribution towards protection of human rights in Guntur District



Mrs. Indira, Child Development Project Officer (CDPO) of Women & Child Welfare Department, Tadikonda Region was honoured by Sisters of the Good Shepherd for her contribution towards the protection and promotion of rights of children



Adolescent Girls who participated in the Human Rights Rally pose for a photo shoot in remembrance of the day



Mr. Babu, Member of Good Shepherd CHILDLINE Team, proposes vote of thanks to the special invitees for sharing their thoughts on Human Rights and to the participants for their active participation and listening



District-level Human Rights Campaign - Sr. Vinnarasi, Director of Good Shepherd Convent, Amaravathi jointly lights lamp with Mrs. Mano Ranjini, Project Director of Women and Child Welfare Department, Andhra Pradesh as the Collector of Guntur District Mr. M. Venu Gopal Reddy, I.A.S., looks on.



Sr. Latha, Director of CHALICE Educational and Community Sponsorship Programme, Good Shepherd Convent, Mangalagiri, joins in the lighting of lamp along with Mrs. Suyan, District Medical Officer, in the presence of Mr. M. Venu Gopal Reddy, I.A.S., Collector of Guntur District, Andhra Pradesh



"UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS focuses on equal rights for all"
 says Mr. M. Venu Gopal Reddy, I.A.S., District Collector of Guntur District



"Protection Of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) differentiates between many sorts of sexual abuse, such as penetrative and non-penetrative assault, sexual harassment, and pornography"
 says Dr. Francis Thambi, Director of Child Rights Advocacy Foundation, Andhra Pradesh



**“Practice of Child Marriage is one of the worst forms of human rights violations”
says Sr. Vinnarasi, Director of Good Shepherd Convent, Amaravathi**



Girl Children expressed their happiness through the human rights-related social awareness songs and dances between the speeches on human rights by the special invitees

