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## India's human rights record under UN scanner

Under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), human rights record of all 192 UN member states is reviewed by the Human Rights Council.

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By Rita Joseph  
**New Delhi:** Rights groups have said that India is to face "enormous human rights challenges" ahead of a UN review in Geneva tomorrow.

With the Human Rights Council set to conduct its second periodic review, Miloon Kothari, convener of the Working Group on Human Rights in India, said that the world's second most populous country must improve on everything from poverty and housing to abuse against women and child trafficking.

"Given the enormous human rights challenges faced by India, the second Universal Periodic Review offers it an opportunity to admit its shortcomings and offer to work with the UN, civil society and independent institutions in India toward implementation of national and international human rights commitments," Kothari, who is also a former UN special rapporteur on adequate housing in India, said at a WGHR side event in Geneva.

Under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), human rights record of all 192 UN member states is reviewed by the Human Rights Council every four and a half years.

More than 40 percent of children under five are under weight, he said, while India still has the highest number of malnourished people in the world at 21 percent of the population.

"While the average growth rate [in India] between 2007 and 2011 was 8.2 percent, poverty declined by only 0.8 percent," said Kothari, adding that if India applied globally accepted standards of measurement the nationwide poverty rate would be close to 55 percent.

India still ranks 134th out of 187 countries on the UN human development index despite recording among the highest GDP growth rates in the world in recent years.

"Economic growth is taking place at the cost of the most marginalized groups," said Prafulla Samantra, President of the Lokashakti Abhijan (People's Empowerment Movement).

Forced land acquisitions have caused large-scale displacement, dispossession and homelessness in the case of ethnic minorities and dalits, the lowest caste in India, said Samantra, adding that rights defenders continued to be targeted and implicated in false criminal cases.

Rights activists painted a grim picture of other abuses they said remain commonplace in India.

Women still faced widespread targeted violence in public and private spaces, said activist Madhu Mehra.

Quoting official figures, she said one Indian woman is raped every half an hour and a young woman is found beaten to death, burned or driven to suicide every six hours.

Children still face high levels of mortality, morbidity, under-age marriage and trafficking, she added, with millions working illegally every day.

A report by the National Human Rights Council said that the Armed Forces Special Powers Act in Jammu, Kashmir and areas of the northeast of the country created "impunity that often leads to the violation of human rights."

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Human rights lawyer Vrinda Grover said India will tomorrow also have to explain why it has failed to ratify the UN Convention against Torture despite accepting to do so at its first review by the UN Human Rights Council in 2008.

India has underlined its commitment toward respecting fundamental human rights through its flagship programs for overcoming poverty, providing gender equality, adequate housing, justice, livelihood and food security.

But the rights groups said that the government's own assessment, which is due to be considered as part of the review process, "falls flat" as it fails to take account of the real situation.

They said the government's report lacks critical analysis of actual realization of rights and implementation of laws and schemes in India.

Source: [ucanews.com](http://ucanews.com)

Human Rights , UPR , UN Scanner , Universal Periodic Review , Periodic Review

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