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"Parallel reports" submitted to U.N.

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BANGALORE Even as the Union Government is finalising a report on its human rights status to be submitted to the United Nations Human Rights Council for a review scheduled for April, about 20 human rights groups and coalitions from across the country have submitted what are called "parallel reports." The largest coalition among them with 205 groups and individuals, People's Forum for Universal Periodic Review in India, has 19 groups from Karnataka.

A compilation of reports from civil society groups will act as a foil against which the government's report will be evaluated in the review, said Mathew Philip of South India Cell for Human Rights Education and Monitoring, one of the signatories of the People's Forum report.

"Our reports will ensure that the State do not get away with making tall claims on the human rights status," he said. The review, called Universal Period Review, is an exercise mandatory for all member-states of the United Nations.

Henri Tiphagne of the People's Watch, who was in Bangalore for a discussion on the shadow report, said

that the People's Forum report was finalised after a two-day consultation in Delhi. He said that the Union Government was yet to hold a discussion with civil society groups on how it would go about compiling its report.

The 12-page report by People's Forum cites cases of human rights violations, judicial delays and unimplemented recommendations of commission of inquiry. It points out, for instance, that there have been nine inquiry commissions on the the Sikh riots since 1984.

Under various heads, the report then talks about violence against women, atrocities of minorities and Dalits, custodial deaths and child abuse cases.

"India has a plethora of laws — laws almost on every subject and every issue except possibly torture and accountability of the State. India's commitment cannot be measured by the Constitution, various national laws, or judgments of the Supreme Court. India's commitment must be judged from its commitment to implement which stands exposed from the report on human rights situation on the ground," says the People's Forum report.