



Punjab & Haryana HC Issues Notice on Anti-Begging Laws

Why in News?

The [Punjab and Haryana High Court](#) has issued notices to the governments of Haryana and Punjab regarding a [Public Interest Litigation \(PIL\)](#) petition that challenges the **constitutionality of certain provisions in 50-year-old state laws that criminalise begging.**

Key Points

▪ About the Petition:

- The petition contends that **anti-begging laws** in **Punjab** and **Haryana** are discriminatory and infringe upon the [rights to equality, life, and personal liberty guaranteed](#) by the Constitution of India.
- The PIL argues that the State has a social contract to ensure its citizens are able to live a dignified life and that the State **“cannot be allowed”** to treat begging as an offence.
- The petition further takes issue with the way the act of begging has been defined in these laws, arguing that they **violated [Articles 14, 19, and 21](#)** of the [Constitution of India](#).

▪ Definition of Begging:

- The definition classifies **any act of soliciting or receiving alms in public places as begging, including by singing, dancing, fortune-telling, performing tricks, or selling articles.**
- The only difference between these vocations and others is that these vocations have **“no price tag”** as that’s been left to the audience to pay.
- The law also defines begging as asking for alms on **private property**, especially if it involves **showing wounds, deformities, or injuries.**
- The definition of begging in the [Haryana Prevention of Beggary Act, 1971](#), which has been challenged, is based on the [Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, 1959](#).
- It is a definition that is used by the **Union government**, to identify people engaged in begging, for **welfare** and **rehabilitation schemes.**

▪ Legal Implications:

- The outcome of this case could have significant implications for the **treatment of [marginalized communities](#)** and the **legal framework surrounding [poverty](#)** and **homelessness** in India.

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