



Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD)

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AFAD STATEMENT FOR THE COMMEMORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL WEEK OF THE DISAPPEARED 2017

First commemorated by the Latin American Federation of Associations of Relatives of Disappeared-Detainees (FEDEFAM) in the early 80s, the International Week of the Disappeared has been adopted by the Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD) to serve as a venue to campaign against this heinous crime and reaffirm its solidarity to all victims and their families.

Enforced disappearances have continued to be perpetrated around the world, with Asia being the region with the highest number of reported cases to the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID).

Despite the increasing number of cases, the status of signatures and ratifications of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance is still very poor in Asia.

Looking at countries where AFAD has members, only one is a State Party to the Convention (Sri Lanka, May 2016), and four are signatories (India, Thailand, Laos, Indonesia). Sri Lanka has still to recognize the competence of the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances in terms of inter-state complaints.

AFAD is particularly worried by the recent trend to suppress, threaten and harass journalists and media personnel working to report human rights violations, including enforced disappearance, in their countries.

Particularly worrisome are the situations in Bangladesh, Kashmir, Thailand, Laos and Pakistan, where journalists and activists are constantly under threat, being arrested, jailed and sometimes even disappeared.

In Bangladesh, pro-opposition political activists, people having alternative beliefs, and student activists, continue to be subject to enforced disappearance, torture and extrajudicial killings. According to information received by AFAD, from January to April 2017, a total of 30 persons have been disappeared by men claiming to be members of law enforcement agencies.

In other countries, such as Nepal and Indonesia, even though a transitional justice process is in place, truth and justice for victims are not fully guaranteed under the current scheme. Human rights organizations in Nepal have repeatedly called for an amendment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act, as well as for the respect and implementation of the courts' orders, but so far to no avail. In Indonesia, the government keeps pushing for reconciliation, allowing no space for justice or truth to be delivered to the victims.

Impunity continues to be enjoyed by perpetrators everywhere. Even in Timor-Leste, where a process of reunification of the Stolen Children with their biological parents is being carried out by human rights organizations on the ground, several cases remain undocumented to date, while

those that have been documented are unresolved. Perpetrators of the disappearance of the Stolen Children have yet to be charged and tried in courts.

In South Korea as well, despite the increase in international attention given to North Korea-perpetrated disappearances, only 20 abductees have so far been reunited with their families.

The Philippines and Sri Lanka are the only two countries in Asia that have adopted a national law criminalizing enforced disappearance. However, full and strict implementation of the law is still lacking in the Philippines, whose government has been heavily criticized during the recent UPR review, due to the number of extrajudicial killings linked to the 'war against drugs'. This disheartening human rights panorama is made even more worrisome by the recent declaration of Martial Law in Mindanao.

AFAD calls on all governments to respect human rights of all individuals, particularly the right not to be subjected to enforced disappearance.

Too many families continue to suffer due to the absence of a mother, a father, a son or a daughter... No one should ever face such unimaginable pain and anguish.

On this week, AFAD joins the global call for a world without disappearances and for truth and justice to be finally delivered to all victims.

Signed by,



KHURRAM PARVEZ
Chairperson



MARY AILEEN D. BACALSO
Secretary-General