



Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD)

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AFAD Anniversary:

19 Years for a World Without *Desaparecidos*

4 June 2017 – Nineteen years ago, the Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD) was founded in Manila, Philippines by the Families of Victims of Involuntary Disappearances (FIND, Philippines), the Association of Parents and Family Members of the Disappeared (APDP, in the disputed state of Jammu and Kashmir) and the then Organization of Parents and Family Members of the Disappeared (OPFMD, Sri Lanka).

Today, AFAD has grown into a Federation of 14 member-organizations from 10 countries, namely Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste and with individual members in Laos and in Switzerland.

The expansion of AFAD also testifies to the widespread diffusion of the crime of enforced disappearances in Asia over the past decades, which requires a collective, unified and global response.

Firmly convinced of the importance of having an international instrument to tackle the issue of enforced disappearance, AFAD actively participated in the negotiation process of a legally binding human rights treaty, which is now the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

Even with the adoption of a strong treaty with an independent monitoring body, which is the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances, States have continued committing this crime, shielding perpetrators and allowing impunity to grow exponentially.

AFAD, as the focal point of the International Coalition Against Enforced Disappearances (ICAED), also links arms with other regional and international actors to continuously strive to attain universal ratification and implementation of the Convention.

Over the years, through its visible presence in international venues, AFAD contributed to debunk the myth that enforced disappearance is solely a Latin American problem. It also actively engaged with government institutions in various countries, to lobby for the signing and ratification of the Convention, as well as for the enactment of a national legislation criminalizing enforced disappearances. It is unfortunate however that despite the fact that Asia has submitted the highest number of enforced disappearances to the UN, very few Asian states ratified the Convention and recognized the competence of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances. Sri Lanka is the only state in countries with AFAD member-organizations that ratified the Convention and at the same time, enacted a domestic law against enforced disappearances. The Philippines, which is its country of base, enacted the first anti-disappearance law in Asia, but refuses to sign and ratify the Convention.

Moreover, using best practices from Guatemala and El Salvador, AFAD elaborated the Minimum Standards for Psychosocial Support in Cases of Enforced Disappearances, which served to orient and further support its member organization HAK during reunification events of Stolen Children with their biological families in Timor-Leste.

AFAD human rights defenders have been threatened, persecuted and even killed. However, even amidst persecution, AFAD stands strong.

Hence, today more than ever, the struggle carried out by AFAD and its member-organizations to help victims and their families get truth and justice, is of outmost importance.

In these 19 years, the Federation has gone a long way and every step – no matter how small – has taken it a bit closer to achieving its much-cherished dream of a world without *desaparecidos*.

One day, the fate of all the disappeared will be clarified and their families will get truth, justice and reparations. Until that day, AFAD will continue give voice to those who would otherwise be unheard. AFAD will not forget and it will not remain silent in the face of the sufferings of the many victims and their families.

Signed:



KHURRAM PARVEZ
Chairperson



MARY AILEEN D. BACALSO
Secretary-General