

ASIAN FEDERATION AGAINST INVOLUNTARY DISAPPEARANCES

ANNUAL REPORT 2018



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I. INTRODUCTION

In Asia, the situation of human rights in general and of the phenomenon of enforced disappearances (ED) in particular is abysmal. Countries are under repressive regimes and disregard for human rights is rampant. Extrajudicial execution, arbitrary detentions and ED are recorded every day. There are curbs on fundamental freedoms like freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom of religion.

According to Odhikar, according to Odhikar, in the year 2018, not less than 465 cases of extrajudicial executions and 90 cases of ED were recorded. An anti- drug drive was started by the ruling Awami party which has led to the killing of not less than 465 persons and more than 20,000 incarcerations since May 2018. The general elections in Bangladesh in December 2018 were marred by violence, media crackdown and rigging. The situation was very tense.

In Indonesia, there was an unsupportive political atmosphere for working on human rights. There are thousands of cases of ED in Indonesia from 1965 – 1966 massacre that are yet to be resolved by the government. The family members of the disappeared have struggled for years to know the truth. Ahead of the Parliamentary elections in April 2019, there is political tension in the country, with two strong contenders fighting the elections against each other.

In Indian-administered Jammu & Kashmir, absolute impunity is guaranteed to the perpetrators of human rights violations. The Indian government is in denial about the 8,000 cases of ED despite clinging evidence about the culpability of Indian Armed Forces and also after State Human Rights Commission authenticating the allegations of unmarked and mass graves and hundreds of other cases of ED.

In Nepal, in 2018, the government extended the tenure of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the Commission for Investigation of Enforced Disappeared Persons (CIEDP) by a year. The commissions, which were formed with a two-year mandate, had their primary objectives to resolve conflict issues and provide transitional justice to the war-era victims.

In Pakistan, the new government came to power with Imran Khan as the Prime Minister. Many hailed him as a progressive leader with regard for human rights. There have been discussions in the country on the ratification of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED), which is a positive development. However, EDs continue to be perpetrated. Defence for Human Rights has registered 147 cases of disappearances in 2018.

In the Philippines, 75 cases of EDs have been recorded from 2014-2017. During the second year of the Duterte administration, already 13,000 of drug related killings have been documented. There is a climate of impunity. Even after the enactment of the Anti-Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance Law in 2012, there have been no convictions under the law because of the Department of Justice's refusal to recognize the continuing character of ED.

In South Korea, EDs occurred since 1950 as the North Korean government has systematically abducted foreign citizens. North Korea abducted 100,000 civilians during the Korean War alone, and 3,835 more after the War. Among the post-war abduction cases, 516 confirmed cases remain unresolved.

The Sri Lankan government has ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances in 2016. The ratification was followed by the setting up of the Office of Missing Persons. The Office will only have powers of investigation but not prosecution, which is not helpful in guaranteeing truth, justice, reparation and non-recurrence.

In Timor-Leste, the cases of ED from the time of Indonesian Military rule have still not been resolved. The plan to establish a Missing Persons Search Commission in East Timor was discussed in 2014 but it has not materialized so far. During the Indonesian Military occupation of East Timor, children were stolen. Civil society organizations made an effort to reunify the stolen children with their families. But both the Indonesian and Timor-Leste governments have refused to respond to the recommendations of the civil society organizations.

Additionally, India, Bangladesh and the Philippines were elected in the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC). These countries have shown consistent disregard for human rights and have been oppressive and authoritarian in their functioning instead of being democratic. This makes the situation precarious for human rights organizations and defenders.

Despite these hardships, AFAD continues to seek truth, justice and reparation for the victims of EDs through its member organizations. Like the previous years, the year 2018 has been extremely challenging with members and staff of AFAD Member-Organizations (MOs) being threatened and intimidated. AFAD has continually engaged in lobby and advocacy to ensure safety of its members. Activities were carried out towards the goal of ensuring a world without *desaparecidos*.

1. REGIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION

a. Bangladesh

The overall political or human rights situation in Bangladesh is worsening due to the aggressive attitude of the government towards political opponents, alternative believers and dissenters ahead of the upcoming Parliamentary elections to be held in December 2018. The incumbent (Awami League) government is dominating the election ground by violating freedom of opinion, expression, assembly and association through suppression of opposing and dissenting voices.



The government has enacted and/or amended several draconian laws to suppress the human rights defenders, political activists and persons/groups who are critical of the government's inactions. Last month the government passed the Digital Security Act (DSA), 2018, ignoring objections on some of the sections of this Act from all stakeholders. Such law has already been imposed against citizens and dissenters in order to gag the voice of the media and violate freedom of

expression as feared by human rights organizations and media.

Extrajudicial killings on the pretext of an 'anti-drug drive' commenced from 15 May 2018 and continued unabatedly and since then, more than 465 persons have been killed and more than 20,000 people have been arrested.

Incidents of ED are escalating in the country. This is worsened by the constant denial from the government that EDs occur and by its refusal to locate the disappeared persons. Odhikar feared that opposition leaders and activists could be subjected to ED ahead of the upcoming elections, are now taking place in reality. The bodies of the disappeared victims are recovered from different places.

Incidents of torture in custody and impunity of law enforcement agencies are occurring on a regular basis. The families of the disappeared and human rights defenders are facing threats and harassment for their work by the government, particularly by law enforcement agencies and the ruling party activists.

In the month of November, 2018, Odhikar became a victim of a huge maligning campaign with vernacular newspapers running stories against how it had been indulging in anti-national activities in the garb of human rights work. This placed a great threat on the members of Odhikar and the existence of the organization. In Bangladesh, this is an example of how human rights defenders and organizations are continually attacked on their credibility and functioning and the different ways in which they are persecuted.

b. Indonesia

In the wake of the upcoming Presidential Elections in Indonesia, the situation is tense in the country. There have been several attempts to thwart students meetings and public discussions by the State apparatus and also a vigilante group. An event for paying tribute to Wiji Thukul (a poet who was disappeared in 1998) in Jogjakarta was disrupted by a vigilante group called *Pemuda Pancasila*. The political situation is worrying. There is a curtailment of



fundamental freedoms like the freedom of speech, freedom to assembly and freedom of religion. As President Joko Widodo is running for the elections, there is fear that if he comes to power, the situation of human rights will remain the same. President Joko Widodo failed to fulfill his commitment to settle the past cases of human rights violations, including cases of EDs. The situation became worse when Jokowi appointed Wiranto, an alleged perpetrator of several human rights violations including the ED cases of 1997/1998, as a Coordinating Minister of Political, Law and Security Affairs in 2016. These actions are indicative of the government’s intentions of preserving the culture of impunity in Indonesia.

Despite repeated commitments by the successive Indonesian governments and recommendations in the 2nd and 3rd cycles of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), the governments have failed to ratify the ICPPED. But the Presidential elections may also serve as an opportunity to push for the ratification of the ICPPED.

c. Jammu & Kashmir, India

The situation in Indian-Administered Jammu and Kashmir is alarming as violations of human rights have become a daily practice of armed forces in Kashmir. Every day there are incidents of violence wherein there are extrajudicial executions of civilians, particularly youth. Numerous cases of torture were reported and there was no end to illegal and unlawful detention of ordinary people. The armed forces have unleashed an unrelenting reign of terror across Kashmir, besides perpetration of human rights abuses, the armed forces have resorted to use disproportionate use of force to subjugate people and to muzzle the voice of truth in Kashmir. There are curbs on the right to



expression, freedom of assembly, privacy and religious freedoms. Cordon and search operations and arbitrary detentions were a common practice that violated human rights.

The scale of violence and abuse of rights had gone up since the state of Jammu and Kashmir underwent into Governor's rule in the month of June 2018 and continues to reel under the said tyrannical rule. The day to day life was marred by the unremitting incidents of violence and sporadic events of human rights violations. The much touted Indian states' claim of peace has no backing of facts and figures. The statistics put government's peace claim under severe scrutiny. Since the beginning of 2018, more than 141 civilians have been killed extra-judicially and there is no accountability to perpetrators as the armed forces continue to enjoy impunity under Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA). The Indian State has launched a complete crackdown against political, civil society and rights activists in Kashmir and a distressing culture of fear has been created across Kashmir.

In addition, the government continues to be in denial about the 8,000 disappeared persons in Jammu & Kashmir. The families of the disappeared have fought long battles for truth and justice but the process is without end. The government did not conduct DNA and forensic tests of the 7,000+ mass graves in the region. The situation kept on worsening.

d. Nepal

Nepal ended long-simmering transition by successfully conducting three tiers of elections which opened a window for peace, prosperity, economic development, and just society. Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli from the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) has been sworn in as the 41st Prime Minister of Nepal in mid-February formally concluding the long-delayed political transition.

Among high expectations and hopes, the present government took some initiatives in controlling corruption, dealing with burning issues and mismanagement and building accountability. However, the results of these actions are yet to be realized. In the name of regulating foreign aids, the government introduced National Integrity Policy (NIP), created havoc among the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) and the wider community in the country. Due to severe criticism from home and abroad, the government finally agrees to amend the policy bill incorporating the suggestions received from the stakeholders. The UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders and the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief provided their comment on NIP and Ethics Policy (2014).



Similarly, in June, the government decided to ban protest programs and rallies declaring prohibited zones in almost all places of Kathmandu Valley including Maitighar Mandala, a centrally located and historical venue for the demonstration which was supposed to be strictly implemented from 15 July. The decision of the government was intensely criticized by the human rights organizations, civil society, media and community at large claiming that it is against the spirit of the constitution and it curtails the freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and right to peaceful protest. The writ petition was filed against the decision of the government at the Supreme Court of Nepal on 5

July. Responding to the writ petition, the SC in July has issued a stay order against the ban on protest and rallies in key places including Maitighar Mandala and continues to stay order. Despite having two thirds majorities of ruling parties, the government fails to deliver and perform and instead, plunged into dispute and criticisms due to its own egotism and incompetence.

In August 2018, a former child soldier, Lenin Bista was barred from flying to Bangkok. Immigration officials at the Tribhuvan International Airport on August 24 had stopped Lenin from flying to Thailand, where he was supposed to attend a five-day conference titled “Youth in Conflict Areas: Healing and Peace Building through Social Engagement”. Bista had filed a writ petition at the Supreme Court seeking clarification why he was prevented from flying abroad. The Supreme Court has issued an order to submit clarifications from the ministry of home affairs and other concerned authorities. The case is still sub-judice at the Supreme Court. The National Human Rights Commission and other right bodies have condemned the actions of the government and criticized for growing trend of political intolerance and revenge to opponents and alternative voices.

e. Pakistan

In 2018, the political situation in Pakistan was very unstable, ever since the general election which were held on 25th July, 2018. The country faced terrible economic crisis. The highly hopeful people of Pakistan chose Imran Khan as their leader.



The government was supportive of the cause of the disappeared and their families. It was an opportunity to campaign and lobby for ending ED in Pakistan, which to this date, an ongoing phenomenon. The Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances had shown incompetence in disposing all of its functions, as opposed to its claims. The approach was lackadaisical and perfunctory. There were 1,874 cases that remained unheard and thus unresolved in the Commission. The head of the Commission, Justice Javed Iqbal, stopped appearing for the hearings, thus keeping the cases in a perpetual state of limbo. Long standing cases from the time of General Musharaf were still unresolved and need special attention.

The Senate of Pakistan passed the Resolution No. (398) on, 30 August, 2018 EDs. The five point resolution clearly stated the need to criminalize this phenomenon by ratifying the ICPEID and ensure truth, justice, recovery, punishment to the perpetrator and non-recurrence. This was also confirmed by Minister of Human Rights, Shireen Mazari also announced that ratification of the Convention is important. During the third cycle of UPR of Pakistan in November 2017, 12 countries recommended Pakistan’s ratification of the treaty.

f. Philippines

Since President Rodrigo Duterte assumed the Presidency in Philippines in 2016, there has been a systematic violation of human rights in the country. He immediately launched his infamous ‘war on drugs’ which had resulted in extrajudicial killings, undocumented EDs, torture and ill treatment of individuals. According to Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA), “Duterte effectively defined a particular section of Philippine society worthy of elimination which he regards as “not part of humanity” by dehumanizing drug dependents and petty drug peddlers in public through fear

mongering and spurious statistics, thereby fomenting popular hatred towards this “inconvenient” sector.”

While some individuals have been dehumanized in the war of drugs, human rights defenders have been maligned as protectors of criminals, encouraging criminal activities and posing obstacles in development.

According to PAHRA, on May 23, 2017, Pres. Duterte declared a state of martial law and suspended the writ of *habeas corpus* in the whole of Mindanao. In January 2018, he re-extended Martial law in Mindanao for another year which was reaffirmed by the Supreme Court to be constitutional. Martial Law in Mindanao has resulted in massive internal displacement, thousands of deaths, torture, mass arbitrary arrests, destruction of the social fabric and disregard for political and traditional mechanisms in many areas. Also, there were reports of looting by the military, cases of profiling and vilification, enforced disappearance, torture, extra-judicial killings and harassment. It has also resulted in the discrimination of Muslims, imposing upon them an ID system and the destruction of the social fabric. Traditional mechanisms in many areas have resulted in the restraint of religious freedom.



The Philippines boasts of having the first and only anti-enforced disappearance law in Asia. It was enacted in 2012 after 16 long years of steadfast lobbying by the families of the disappeared. However, the country has yet to ratify the ICPPED. To make matters worse, the law has hardly been implemented. Thus, EDs persist with impunity, especially as a result of the current government's war on drugs. Fear has gripped the communities, making it extremely difficult to document cases. With 45 reported victims under Duterte's term which began on 30 June 2016, it is believed that EDs are underreported.

g. South Korea

In 2018, the political situation in South Korea did not change much in terms of ED. The latest ED crime towards South Korean civilians committed by North Korean government happened in 2000. Worrisome situation is that North Korean human right problems were not discussed in the recent summits between North and South Korea.

The South Korean government tended to justify the situation by saying they need to focus on resolving the North Korean nuclear issue first. Lately, some South Korean National Assembly members even proposed an amendment bill aiming to remove the terms “abductee” in relation to the acts committed on ROK nationals by the North Korean government during the Korean War and in the post-Korean War period, and replace them with the term “missing persons”.



Letters written by a disappeared person taken to North Korea before his family members lost connections with him.

In the justification section which explains the rationale for the amendments, it is stated that the “term ‘a person abducted to North Korea’ draws resistance from North Korea” and further argues that the “legal basis for the conflict

should be rearranged.” Although the bill was withdrawn facing criticism, the situation regarding North Korean human rights requires close and constant monitoring.

The Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights in South Korea has documented 74 cases which were reported to the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (UNWGEID). Since 1950, the North Korean government has systematically abducted foreign citizens and South Koreans as a state policy. North Korea abducted 100,000 South Korean civilians during the Korean War alone, and 3,835 more after the War. 516 confirmed post-war cases of abduction remain unresolved today. During its third UPR in November 2017, South Korea received recommendations from 8 states for the ratification of ICPPED.

h. Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, after the ratification of the ICPPED in 2016, the government established the Office of Missing Persons (OMP). The Office only has powers of investigation but not of prosecution, which is not helpful in guaranteeing transitional justice. In 2018, the OMP commemorated the International Day of Disappearances under the theme "No More Disappearances.” Some of the conclusions of the meetings of the OMP were presented to the families of the disappeared from several districts, one of which is the recommendation to pay a temporary allowance to all the families until the reparation commission becomes active. Despite the government’s efforts, the leisurely speed of the government procedures is instilling suspicion in the victims’ families.



Former fighters, children and civilians who disappeared during the 26-year civil war are still missing. [Al Jazeera]

Sri Lanka was going through a political crisis. The legislators loyal to the former President Mahinda Rajapaksa boycotted the parliamentary session for the second time in November 2018, as the speaker refused to acknowledge the government as legitimate. Mahinda Rajapaksa assumed office as Prime Minister in October 2018 after President Maithripala Sirisena sacked Premier Ranil Wickremesinghe. Since then, the political crisis in the country which is triggered by two men claiming to be the lawful Prime Minister has been met with severe protests from civil society. The Sri Lankan Rupee is at an all-time low, pointing towards an impending financial crisis. In this situation, the issue of ED had taken a backseat.

i. Timor-Leste

In Timor-Leste, after a year of political impasse resulting from a minority government, the country was able to have a stable government. The government has faced a lot of pressures from the strong opposition as well as the public to deliver the promises made during the campaign. During his swearing in ceremony, the new Prime Minister promised to dedicate his energies and knowledge to the defense and consolidation of independence and national unity.



Family reunion of stolen children with their biological families in Lautem District, Luro after 30 years.

Victims of serious human rights violations committed during the Indonesian occupation (1975-1999) continued to demand justice and reparations. Security forces were accused of ill-treatment. Journalists faced defamation charges for carrying out their work.

j. Laos

The political situation in Laos is quite dismal. Restrictions on civil and political rights in Laos include repressive controls over freedom of speech, association, and peaceful assembly. The lack of fair trials of criminal suspects, widespread judicial corruption, and entrenched impunity for human rights violations are continuing problems.

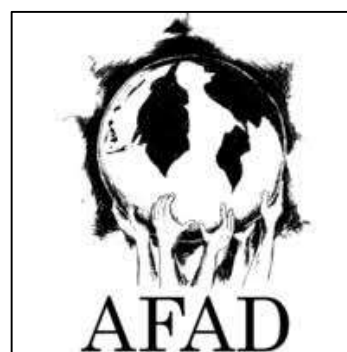
Last year, in the meeting of the UN Human Rights Committee with regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights on 11th and 12th of July 2018, the Lao government was set to answer the questions about the dismal state of civil and political rights in the country. Instead of responsibly responding to the questions regarding the investigations into the ED of Sombath, the Lao Government Delegation headed by Bounkeut Sangsomsak made insulting statements against Sombath and his family, saying that Sombath possessed huge amounts of money and property, implying that property dispute could have caused his disappearance. The delegation also directed derogatory remarks towards Sombath’s wife Shui Meng calling her his “so-called wife”. Link: <https://www.mekongeye.com/2018/07/17/lao-delegation-ducks-questions-at-un-rights-review/>



There are many allegations of ED on the Lao government which it audaciously refutes. The Lao government signed the ICPED in 2008 and is yet to ratify it. Being a signatory, Laos is morally obliged to not commit acts contrary to the treaty. Its recent pronouncement at the UN has violated the spirit and letter of the treaty and has rendered itself unworthy of being a signatory. The government describes the incapacity of its functionaries as a reason for the delay in the ratification.

2. ORGANIZATIONAL SITUATION

The year 2018 marked AFAD’s completion of its two decades of struggle for a world without *desaparecidos*. AFAD saw the light of day on June 4, 1998 in Manila, Philippines through the initiative of the Families of Victims of Involuntary Disappearance (FIND), the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP) and the now defunct Organization of Parents and Family Members of the Disappeared (OPFMD). When AFAD was established two decades ago, never did its founders dream that the Federation would reach two decades of existence. This is so because with enforced disappearance



as its issue and with attaining a world without *desaparecidos* as its vision, AFAD always hopes and struggles to render itself irrelevant. Yet, the Asian human rights situation speaks that ED in the region, as evidenced in the annual reports of the UNWGEID, continue unabated, victimizing several men and women from all walks of life, young and old alike. *Desaparecidos*, their families and the rest of society unfortunately still need the continuing existence of AFAD.

Below is AFAD’s organizational structure:

A. AFAD

Country	Name of Organization
Bangladesh	Odhikar
Indonesia	Association of Families of the Disappeared (IKOHI)
Indonesia	THE Commission for the Disappeared Victims of Violence (KontraS)
Jammu and Kashmir	Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP)
Nepal	Advocacy Forum (AF)
Nepal	Conflict Victims’ Society for Justice (CVSJ)
Pakistan	Defence of Human Rights (DHR)
Philippines	Families of Victims of Involuntary Disappearance (FIND)
Philippines	Free Jonas Burgos Movement (FJBM)
Sri Lanka	Families of the Disappeared (FOD)
South Korea	Citizens’ Alliance for North Korean Human Rights (NKHR)
Thailand	Justice for Peace Foundation (JPF)
Thailand	Relatives Committee of the May 1989 Heroes (RCMH)
Laos	Individual Member - Ng Shui Meng

B. Council Members

Designation	Name	Organization
Chairperson	Khurram Parvez	APDP
Secretary-General	Mary Aileen Diez-. Bacalso	FIND / AFAD
Treasurer	Yati Andriyani	KontraS
South Asia EC Member	Adilur Khan	Odhikar
Southeast Asia EC Member	Nilda Sevilla	FIND

C. Secretariat

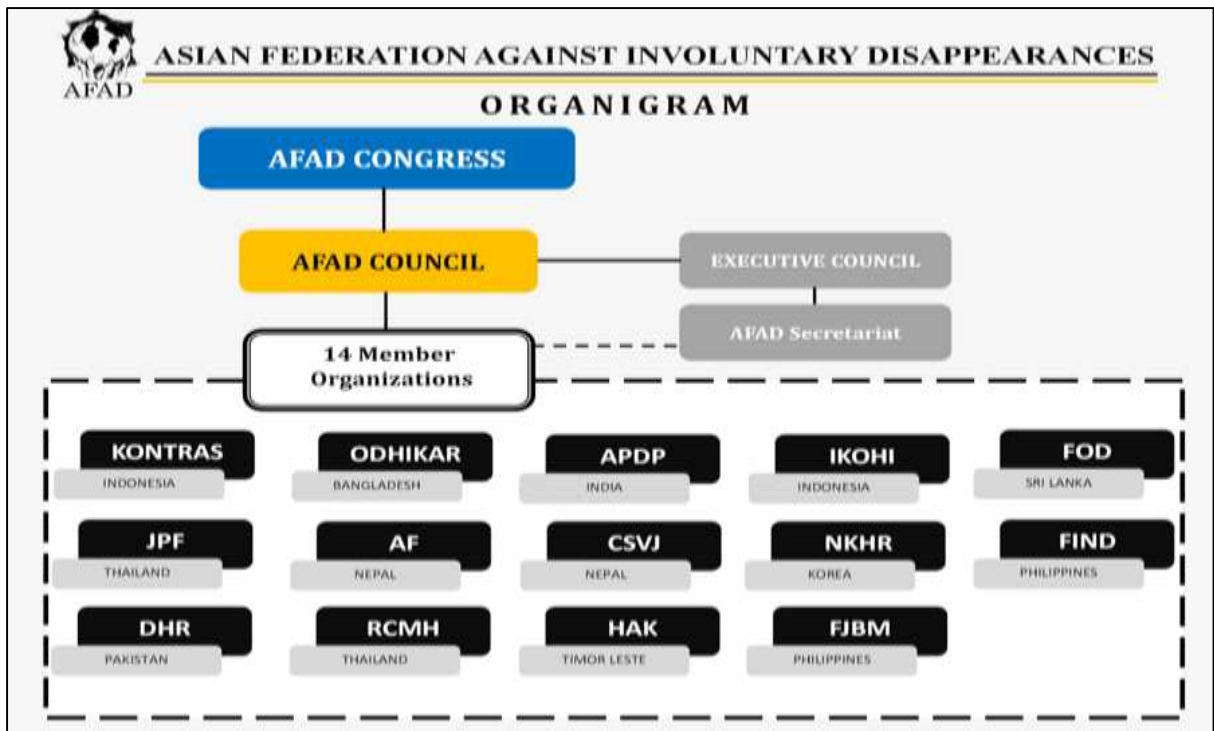
Designation	Name
Secretary-General	Mary Aileen Diez-Bacalso
Finance Officer	Maria Elizabeth Guzman
Bookkeeper	Amy Vina
General Services Staff	Jaime Getanes
Administrative Officer	Christopher Salgado (Sept 2018-present) Julia Umapas (March - August 2018) Jun Ramos (Sept 2017 - Feb 2018)
Regional Campaign Officer	Natasha Rather
International Advocacy Project Staff	Kim Bay
Philippine Project Coordinator	Daphne Hazel Valdez-Navelino (Nov 2018 - present) Kristina Boado (July 2017 - July 2018)
Fundraiser and Assistant to the Secretary-General	Elyse Conde (July 2017 - November 2018)

D. Map



Locations of AFAD Member-Organizations in the region

E. Organigram



II. ACTIVITIES OF AFAD IN 2018

The year 2018 marked the completion of AFAD's 20th year of struggle for a world without *desaparecidos*. Established on 4 June 1998 in the Philippines, AFAD commemorated the completion of the second decade of its work. On that year, below is an enumeration of its activities classified according to its main aspects of work.

1. INTERNATIONAL, REGIONAL CAMPAIGN AND LOBBY

1.1. INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY

- 1.1.1. Participation in the 39th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in September held in Geneva, Switzerland: Delivered oral statements to the HRC on the status of ED and the situation of human rights defenders in the Philippines; held side events on the ratification of the Convention on ED and the human rights situation of the Philippines and Bangladesh and organized a side event on the Imperative of the Universal Ratification and Implementation of the ICCPED.

See link:<https://www.facebook.com/afad.online1/videos/10156850250336052/>

- 1.1.2. Participation in the UN Committee Against Enforced Disappearances' (CED) meeting with Civil Society Organizations in November;
- 1.1.3. Meetings with various UN mechanisms and missions to Geneva for both September and November trips. These include: (a) Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, (b) Special Rapporteur on the Promotion of Truth, Justice, Reparation, and Guarantees of Non-recurrence, (c) Committee on Enforced Disappearances, (d) UNWGEID, (e) International Committee of the Red Cross, (f) Mr. Mika Kanervavuori of the OHCHR, (g) the UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture (UNVFVT), and (h) The Permanent Mission of Iceland to the UN in Geneva.
- 1.1.4. Side events were organized by AFAD and ICAED both on the deteriorating situation of Philippines and Bangladesh and on the Imperative of the Universal Ratification of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. The second side event was participated in by members of the ICAED from Asia, Latin America, Africa, Europe and North America.

- 1.1.5. Meetings with several members of the International Coalition Against Enforced Disappearances (ICAED) in September; Franciscans International in November. Agenda was to strengthen ties and discuss options for working together to (1) address situation of EDs worldwide and the universal ratification of the International Convention for the



ICAED members with Special Rapporteur on Truth, Justice, Reparation, and Guarantees of Non-Recurrence Fabian Salvioli

Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances, and (2) address current human rights situation of the Philippines, and 3. To conduct an Annual General Meeting with both the physical and electronic presence of members as part of the process of registering ICAED as a Swiss association.

2. COUNTRY-SPECIFIC CAMPAIGN

a. Philippines

1. COMMEMORATION OF TRADITIONAL EVENTS

- 1.2. CALVARY OF INJUSTICE (*Kalbaryo ng Kawalan ng Katarungan*): FIND, AFAD, human rights defenders, and families of victims of EJKs gathered at the *Bantayog ng mga Bayani* (Monument of Heroes) on Holy Wednesday (March 28, 2018) to reflect on the Seven Last Words of Jesus Christ and to hold a truth-telling session with relatives of victims of ED and extrajudicial killings under the Duterte administration. The event was published in the [Union of Catholic Asian News](#).



- 1.3. JONAS BURGOS ANNIVERSARY: AFAD joined the Free Jonas Burgos Movement's (FJBM) Commemoration of the 11th Anniversary of Jonas Burgos' ED. The anniversary was held at the Parish of the Holy Sacrifice, and was attended by the Burgos family, various human rights and media groups. Prayers from AFAD MOs were published online in AFAD's social media as an expression of solidarity with the family of Jonas Burgos.



- 1.4. INTERNATIONAL WEEK OF THE DISAPPEARED (IWD): Every last week of May, the global community comes together to renew its pledge to fight for a world without EDs. This year, AFAD held two symbolic activities to commemorate the IWD:

- 1.4.1. Kite-making activity - AFAD, FIND, FJBM, CAED organizations and the Kite Association of the Philippines (KAP) held a kite-making activity which served as an opening event for the IWD and a preparatory event for the kite-flying activity on May 31.



Kite-flying activity - The kite-flying/family day is a major event on the calendar of AFAD. In 2018, AFAD and FIND conducted its annual kite-flying activity with CAED MOs. For the first time, AFAD members from different countries were present in the kite-flying along with other human rights defenders (HRDs) from South America, and Europe.

- 1.5. INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE DISAPPEARED: FIND held a mass and commemoration at the *Bantayog ng mga Bayani* (Monument of Heroes).
- 1.6. ALL SOULS' DAY EVENT: *Participation in All Souls' Day Commemoration Activity: "Pag-gunita sa Kabayanihan ng mga Biktima na Sapilitang Iwinala"* (Remembering the Heroism of the Victims of ED) at the *Bantayog ng mga Bayani*.
- 1.7. INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY



To commemorate the World Human Rights Day, AFAD and FIND co-organized a session on ED and HRDs in the Human Rights Defenders Summit of the Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP) in cooperation with the Medical Action Group.

2. LOBBY WORK

- 2.1. Civil Society Organizations' (CSO) Consultation on Human Rights Defenders (HRD) bill - AFAD and FIND joined Senator Leila de Lima's CSO consultation on the Human Rights Defenders Protection bill. Inputs on how the bill can be improved were collated from the participating organizations.



- 2.2. Human Rights Defenders' (HRD) Bill Press Conference - AFAD and FIND attended the press conference of the Human Rights Defenders bill which was held at the Philippine Senate. The Project Coordinator delivered a solidarity statement during the event. It was an opportunity for AFAD to be heard by the Senate.



- 2.3. Creation of *MAKATAO/Mambabatas Para sa Karapatang Pantao* (Legislators for Human Rights), a coalition of human rights champions in the Philippine Congress. MAKATAO aims to write robust legislation that will protect people from human rights violations and provide justice for those who have become victims to these gross acts.

- 2.4. Media training by the FJBM: The Free Jonas Burgos Movement (FJBM) organized a media training in order to effectively engage the media to forward the advocacies of civil society organizations. Speakers from the media gave their input and shared strategies on proper usage of social media for further reach.

b. Bangladesh

1. COMMEMORATION OF TRADITIONAL EVENTS

- 1.1. INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY: Odhikar organized a discussion meeting on 8 of March 2018 at its office to commemorate International Women's Day. The meeting was presided over by Farida Akhtar, women rights activist and Executive Director of UBINIG. Speakers at the meeting expressed their concern that violence against women is increasing alarmingly in Bangladesh, which has a detrimental effect on women's human rights and political participation.

- 1.2. INTERNATIONAL WEEK OF THE DISAPPEARED:

The International Week of the Disappeared was commemorated in Bangladesh from 26 till the end of May 2018. On this occasion Odhikar issued a joint statement in collaboration with the families of the disappeared organized a human chain in front of



the National Press Club in Dhaka on 26 May and demanded the return of their family members before Eid-ul-Fitr. On 28 May, the family members of Kushtia Islamic University student Al Mukaddas organized a press conference and human chain in Pirojpur. Moreover, human rights defenders associated with Odhikar in Khulna organized discussion meetings on 26 May and on 29 May in Narayanganj and Rajshahi respectively. On 2 June 2018, Odhikar organized a discussion meeting in commemoration of the International Week of the Disappeared where Odhikar expressed solidarity with all the family members of the victims of ED in Bangladesh and their continuing struggle.

- 1.3. INTERNATIONAL DAY IN SUPPORT OF VICTIMS OF TORTURE: In order to commemorate this day, Odhikar and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) issued a joint statement to remember and honor the victims of torture in Bangladesh. Odhikar also organized a discussion meeting on 26 June with human rights defenders, civil society members, media activists and victims' families. Speakers at the meeting talked about the use of torture in Bangladesh used routinely by the state to suppress political opponents, dissenting voices, vulnerable groups and ordinary citizens alike. Furthermore, Human Rights Defenders Network (HRDN) of Odhikar at different districts also organized, meetings, rallies and human chains of this occasion.

- 1.4. **INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE VICTIMS OF ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES:** On the 30th of August, Odhikar commemorated the day by organizing rallies, human chains and meeting with local human rights defenders and the families of the disappeared associated with it, in 22 districts including Dhaka. Odhikar also issued a statement on this occasion and circulated it to national and international networks.



- 1.5. **24TH ANNIVERSARY OF Odhikar:** Odhikar issued a statement on its 24th founding anniversary remembering the victims of human rights violations around the world. Odhikar has been consistently working to defend the rights of the people through documentation, monitoring, awareness, research and advocacy. Odhikar has been facing extreme repression and harassment by the Awami League government since 2013. Despite facing persecution, harassment, non-renewal of its registration and the freezing of its bank accounts, Odhikar remains steadfast in its defence of human rights and justice.
- 1.6. **INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN:** On the occasion of the International Day for Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November, Odhikar produced a video documentary on violence against women in Bangladesh, which has been widely circulated through YouTube. Violence against women is endemic in Bangladesh. Women and girls are subjected to domestic violence, rape, dowry and its related violence, acid violence, stalking and sexual harassment, etc. In the video, Odhikar highlighted the data on various forms of violence faced by women in Bangladesh in both the private and public sphere.
- 1.7. **INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY.** On the 10th of December, local human rights defenders associated with Odhikar organized rallies and meetings in different districts of Bangladesh.
2. **CAMPAIGN AND DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION ON ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES**
- 2.1. Odhikar gathered information on ED through its countrywide network of local human rights defenders and includes them in its monthly human rights monitoring reports. Such information and reports are disseminated to the media and national and international networks. 27 case studies and updated information on ED have been incorporated into Odhikar's human rights reports during the year.

3. **DOCUMENTATION:**

- 3.1. Odhikar regularly documents cases of ED through its documentation team and updates AFAD's regional database. According to information gathered by Odhikar, in 2018, a total of 90 persons were disappeared after being picked up by different state security forces and/or by the men claiming to be members of law enforcement agencies. 8 were found dead and 43 were shown as arrested and later handed over to police and 7 persons surfaced alive or freed after several days of disappearance. The whereabouts of 32 persons remain unknown.

c. Jammu and Kashmir

1. COMMEMORATION OF TRADITIONAL EVENTS:

- 1.1. INTERNATIONAL WEEK OF THE DISAPPEARED (IWD): During the IWD, the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons in association with Indian Association of People's Lawyers (IAPL) held a public rally in the press enclave of Srinagar. During the rally, the participants from APDP and IAPL addressed media and underlined the fact that the Indian State continues to remain in denial of the ongoing international movement against ED.

- 1.2. INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE VICTIMS OF ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES:

On International Day of Disappeared (IDD) Persons the association of Parents of Disappeared Persons held a meeting of all its members and commemorated more than 8,000 persons, who have been subjected to ED in Jammu and Kashmir since the outbreak of conflict in 1989. In correlation to this day, the relatives of disappeared, once again expressed their grave concern that till date the government continues to be reluctant to carry out any wide-ranging investigation to trace these disappeared persons and to




APDP IDD Protest

provide truth and justice to thousands of victimized families. APDP, on the day, also appealed to the UN OHCHR that during its forthcoming sessions, OHCHR in relation to its recent human rights report on Kashmir, must remind the UN Human Rights Council to consider establishing a commission of inquiry to conduct a comprehensive independent international investigation into all the allegations of human rights violations including ED in Jammu and Kashmir.

- 1.3. INTERNATIONAL DAY OF WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS: On November 20, 2018, the International Day of Women Human Rights Defenders, the APDP held a members' meeting to remember Aasia Jeelani, a courageous woman human rights defender from APDP, who was killed in 2004 in north Kashmir's Kupwara District, while doing the fact-finding and monitoring elections. During the meeting the members while sharing their thoughts about Aasia memorized her remarkable contributions for the protection of human rights of Kashmiris particularly women. The members commemorated Aasia's determined and benevolent approach for advocating the rights human rights violations victims in Jammu and Kashmir through her research

and documentation work. On this day, special prayers were offered for Aasiya Jeelani. The activity also paid tribute to her exemplary work in the struggle against ED.

- 1.4. **WORLD HUMAN RIGHTS DAY:** On 10th December, due to the intricate security situation for local body elections, no public event could be organized by the association concerning the safety and security of member families, however a meeting of APDP members was called and an online poster campaign concerning the distressing situation of human rights and continued impunity in Kashmir was done.
2. **RESEARCH & DOCUMENTATION:** In 2018, the APDP team documented 5 cases of ED during continuous fact finding missions in different areas across Kashmir Subsequent to the disappearance, bodies of all victims were recovered from different places. The bodies recovered bore visible marks of torture and injuries, but the government seemed to be reluctant for initiating any comprehensive investigations into any of these cases.
3. **SIT INS & MONTHLY MEETINGS:** In 2018, due to the security reasons and extraordinary surveillance from security agencies the association was unable to organize many outdoor activities. The administration in Kashmir largely does not allow outdoor human rights activities and they impose restrictions under section 144 [which prohibits assembly of more than four people]. But still a few sit-ins were organized by the members of the association, wherein they registered their demand for justice for all ED victims. Avoiding any threat to the families, the association focused more on indoor activities including the meetings of the APDP executive. During these meetings the plans and programs of APDP and AFAD were discussed. The members shared their ideas and suggestions regarding the sustainable campaign against disappearance in the prevailing precarious situation. Besides discussions on advocacy and campaigning, the executive members also deliberated on the problems confronted by many of the affected families and on possible remedial measures.

Release of APDP's Annual Human Rights
4. **CAMPAIGNS & MEDIA ENGAGEMENTS:** In the course of engaging media personnel in its campaign against ED, the APDP lobbied with many local and international media organizations and individual journalists and urged them to cover the issue of ED.

d. Indonesia

1. COMMEMORATION OF TRADITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 1.1. In May 2018, Indonesia commemorated the 20 years of reformation. Reformation is defined as a turning point for the democracy in Indonesia, replacing the previous authoritarian regime of Suharto during his 32 years of dictatorship. This is considered as a special occasion and also referred to as a platform for civil society to



encourage the government to refer its policy with the 6 reformation agenda.

- 1.2. INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE VICTIMS OF ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES: On 30 August, IKOHI and KontraS held a press release to encourage government to promptly ratify the ICPED. This press release was raised by several national media. See links:

- a. <https://rmol.co/read/2018/08/31/355055/Keluarga-Korban-HAM-Sudah-Hambar-Hadapi-Pemerintah->
- b. <https://www.acehtrend.com/2018/08/30/hari-antipenghilangan-paksa-sedunia-kontras-desak-presiden-ratifikasi-cped/>

- 1.3. WORLD HUMAN RIGHTS DAY: IKOHI and KontraS held a press release about the human right reports during 2018 underlining the situation of the past human rights abuses that are still unresolved.

2. MEETINGS WITH FAMILIES OF THE DISAPPEARED

- 2.1. Meetings were held with the families of disappeared to give updates on the Talangsari Case that occurred in 1989 where 88 persons were disappeared. Victims of Tanjung Priok case, which occurred in 1984, where 23 persons were disappeared and other families also participated in the meeting.



On 21 and 28 February 2018, the KontraS team visited families of victims of ED in Jakarta and Depok, namely Mr. Paian Siahaan and his family, Mr. Ukok Munandar Siahaan and Ms. Neni, daughter of late Mrs. Tuti Koto and also the sister of Yani Afri. They were apprised about the situation of ED and the progress of their cases

On 7-12 August, IKOHI and KontraS visited the human rights violations victims and their families in Aceh and distributed the Ramadan package to strengthen the bond between victims' families and civil society organization. During the visit in Aceh, an academic discussion was held with regard to past human rights violations in Indonesia to give students in Aceh better understanding of what happened during the New Order Regime.

On 24 August, IKOHI and KontraS held a meeting with victims and victims' families to discuss the plan to make lawsuit for the past human rights abuses to get their perspective on expectations from the lawsuit.

3. ADVOCACY & CAMPAIGNS:

- 3.1. On 2 February 2018, an FGD was conducted for drafting the policy brief for Aceh Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).
- 3.2. On 7-9 February 2018, a series of events were held to commemorate the 29 years of Talangsari Tragedies at Lampung, Sumatera. Activities included public discussion, participation in Thursday rallies, meetings with victims' families.

- 3.3. On 19 July, IKOHI and KontraS organized a press release to reject the reconciliation concept of Wiranto, which he named National Harmony Council (DKN) as a mechanism for settlement of the past human rights abuses through non-judicial process. IKOHI and KontraS are strongly against the idea of DKN because it is seen as an effort of Wiranto to strengthen the impunity to perpetrators.
- 3.4. On 26 July, as follow-up activities to reject the idea of National Harmony Council (DKN), IKOHI and KontraS held a public discussion with students, civil society, as well as victims and victims' families.
- 3.5. On 5 September, IKOHI and KontraS conducted an audience with the Ministry of Law and Human Rights, Yasona Laoly, to discuss about the progress from government to ratify the ICPPED.

e. Nepal

1. COMMEMORATION OF TRADITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 1.1. **THE IWD:** Advocacy Forum Nepal and CVSJ commemorated the IWD in Nepalgunj, the western part of Nepal. During the program, the victims' families were provided information on the ongoing debate of transitional justice and human rights situation particularly focusing on impunity issues. The issues discussed were: the work of TJ bodies, the investigation process of the commissions, the situation of victims and their families and so on. Majority of the victims expressed that the TJ bodies failed to provide truth and justice. Victims also shared their painful stories and expressed suspicion and worries that they will die without knowing the truth and getting justice. However, the victims expressed their commitment to continue their struggle for truth and justice. They also demanded for regular programs that encourage and support them for continuing their struggle.
- 1.2. **IDD ON THE 30th of August-** Member organizations, Advocacy Forum (AF) and Conflict Victims' Justice Society (CVSJ) observed the day of the disappeared in Biratnagar, Janakpur, Kathmandu, Pokhara, Nepalgunj, Butwal, Kanchanpur, Dhangadi and other parts of the country. The activities included submission of memorandum to the chief minister in 7 provinces, blood donation, tree plantation in memory of the disappeared persons, theatre play, paintings, discussion program on the day, and candle vigil including others.

- 1.3. **INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY:** AF became a part of Human Rights Megna Meet- 2018 and organized a series of activities on different themes. The rally, interaction programs, press meet and submission of the memorandum were some of the activities organized by different organizations in Nepal on the international human rights day.



World Human Rights Day Rally

2. **LOBBYING & ADVOCACY:** AF conducted numerous advocacy and lobbying meetings at a local, national and international levels on issues related to impunity, torture, ED and sexual

violence. AF also worked to bring the attention of the international community to the frustrating obstacles. Meetings were held with the US Embassy, the German Embassy, the UK Embassy, the Swiss Embassy and the Finish Embassy in Kathmandu. Other main actors (National Human Rights Commission, International human rights organizations, security forces (Nepal Army and Police) and political leadership of the TJ process) were also met. There was a discussion after the government advanced the law amendment process. An application has been registered on 12 September 2017 with a registration number 1244 at the Ministry of Defence, Singha Durbar Kathmandu in relation to the promotion of Colonel Kumar Lama to the rank of a brigadier general. Janak Raut, accompanied by Bikash Basnet, registered an application seeking detailed and authentic information in relation to his promotion.

2.1. **Victims' Protest on People's War Day:** On 13 February 2018, while the Maoist party was celebrating the 23rd anniversary of the 'People's War Day' (as they have named the occasion), conflict victims were protesting and mourning on this date as the 'Black Day.' The victims staged a protest program in front of the southern gate of Singhadurbar and they later moved to Maitighar Mandala due to Police Intervention.

3. **CONSULTATION MEETINGS WITH VICTIMS AND CIVIL SOCIETY ON TJ PROCESS IN NEPAL:**

Advocacy Forum-Nepal, CVSJ, CVCP, in collaboration with other human rights organizations, convened a series of discussion programs with and among victims groups and civil society on TJ draft bill and the latest development on TJ process in different parts of the country. The AF organized an event in Janakpur, Dhangadi, Pokhara, Surkhet, Nepalgunj Bardiya, Biratnagar and Chitwan in order to make victims and the human rights community aware on the proposed draft bill, provisions and its consequences and human rights situation. Likewise, the AF consulted with human rights organizations and civil society and submitted its preliminary comments on the draft bill. In the second round with an aim to revive



Meeting with Conflict Victims in Nepal

the victims' movement at the grassroots level, the AF organized a series of consultations with victims, the human rights community, civil society, and other concerned stakeholders. The federal level consultations were organized in Federal headquarters and conflict-affected districts. AF will continue to organize consultations with principal stakeholders of TJ process and seek their comments and suggestion in order to advance the TJ process making it credible and victim-centric. The AF has been taking lead role on advancing the TJ process and strengthening the networks of human rights organizations and victims.

4. **DOCUMENTATION:** On the 26th of June, on the occasion of International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, the AF released press statement and demanded to ensure mechanisms for the prevention of torture and ill treatment. This year, AF published a detailed report entitled, "Torture of Juveniles in Nepal, A continuing Challenge".

See link: <http://advocacyforum.org/downloads/pdf/publications/torture/june-26-2018.pdf>

f. Pakistan

1. COMMEMORATION OF TRADITIONAL ACTIVITIES:

1.1. IWD: The events on this week were organized by DHR which conducted various events such as candlelight vigil, protest, and also children's activities. One of the protests was arranged outside the main head office of Defence of Human Rights in Sadar, Rawalpindi. The families of the disappeared as well as the members were invited to join and raise their voice at the occasion of the IWD.

1.2. IWD children's event on 31st May 2018 - This event was organized in the reference of the IDD. The children of the victims of ED participated in this event. To celebrate the occasion of the religious event, Eid ul Fitr the children of the disappeared families wrote letters to their disappeared loved ones.

1.2.1. Consultation meeting with families of the disappeared on 29th June 2018 - The families of the disappeared come to the office of the Defence of Human Rights on weekly basis. They want to get information and update regarding their cases. During those meetings, the family members, often the mothers and wives break down into tears and anxiety attacks. DHR provides them with basic counseling and consultations regarding their case and also updates them on how to build pressure on the authorities.

1.2.2. The Defence of Human Rights also provides the families with legal help, specifically in filing their case in the Supreme Court and in the commission of inquiry.

1.3. **3 YEARS OF DISAPPEARANCE OF MASOOD JANJUA:** On the “Day of Masood,” a campaign was organized by Defence of Human Rights to raise voice on the occasion of 13th year of Masood Janjua’s Disappearance. This campaign was on all platforms of social media for the entire month of July. There were video solidarity messages from all over Asia and AFAD-member organizations. The message demanded the immediate release of Masood Janjua from the Pakistani Government and especially addressing the new Prime Minister, Imran Khan. Each day a video was uploaded as a reminder to the concerned authorities to release Masood Janjua. On the final day which is 30th of July 2018 there was a Seminar conducted by Defence of Human Rights in which the solidarity messages from around the globe were compiled along with the message of Masood Janjua’s family.



1.4. INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE DISAPPEARED: On the occasion of International Day of the Disappeared, Defence of Human Rights organized a 30 days campaign on Social media. This campaign was organized to raise awareness regarding the issue of ED across Pakistan. Every day for the whole month there was a picture uploaded as an

appeal to the authorities on behalf of the families. These 30 days represented 30 families of the Disappeared people across Pakistan.

This campaign was entirely based on victim's perspective. The pictures were colorless, which showed sign of grief and pain the family goes through when a person is disappeared. Pictures of children, mothers, elder parents, and wives showed the audience that they also demand Justice and freedom for their loved ones. The campaign was done on all the social media platforms of Defence of Human Rights.



August 30, 2018 - IDD in Pakistan

2. CAMPAIGNS AND EVENTS

- 2.1. Islamabad club protest on 5th April 2018 - This protest was organized by the Defence of Human Rights because of the statement issued by the head of the Commission of Inquiry. Justice Javed Iqbal, head of Commission stated that the ex-Interior Minister Aftab Sher Pao has accepted to sell Pakistani people for bounties of dollars. The next day, Justice Javed Iqbal revoked his statement saying that he could say anything attributed to ex-Interior Minister.



April 5, 2018 - Islamabad Press Club Protest

- 2.2. Liaison with All International Rajput Association: A local organization which is based on a Punjabi caste system, Rajput conducted meetings with the Defence of Human Rights regarding ED. This organization also presented to the chairperson of DHR an award acknowledging her work in the field of human rights. This award ceremony took place on April 14, 2018.
- 2.3. Defence of Human Rights organized a protest in Islamabad on 28 November 2018 in order to remember all those who are disappeared in Pakistan. The agenda of this protest was to send a reminder to the new Government of Pakistan about its responsibility on human rights. Defence of Human Rights Pakistan strongly urged Prime Minister Imran Khan and Government of Pakistan to take into account the recommendations contained in Memorandum presented to them on 30 August 2018 and work towards the resolution of the grave issue of ED. The set of demands included that the name of Chairperson Amina Masood Janjua be added as representative of the victims, in Task Force which is established to tackle this issue. The commission of Inquiry of Missing Persons should be dissolved. It is important to create a new commission of inquiry with better judges, team and terms of reference. It also included a demand to provide monthly subsistence allowance to all the families of victims of ED by the Government, followed by tracing

and surfacing disappeared people. The participants on this protest include politicians, CSOs, NGOs, youth, families of the disappeared, and lawyers.

- 2.4. D Chowk: Farhatullah Baber, Afrasiyab Khattak, Eng Iftikhar PTI deputy secretary information, MNA Ali Wazir from PTM along with other human rights activists such as Tahira Abdullah and lawyers showed solidarity with the families of the disappeared in a peaceful protest on 19th December 2018. All of the respected leaders promised to continue this struggle to find truth and justice for the aggrieved.

g. South Korea

1. INTERVIEWS: In preparation for the Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights' (NKHR), annual case submissions to the UNWGEID, NKHR staff continued to visit and interview the South Korean family members of victims of EDs to North Korea. By October, NKHR had interviewed 10 family members of the victims in Seoul, Gangneung and Incheon.
2. LOBBYING: The UN COI for DPRK (North Korea) and consecutive Special Rapporteurs for human rights in the DPRK have recognized the targeted abductions of ROK nationals by North Korea during the Korean War and in the postwar period as an ongoing international crime. However, on August 13 2018, 12 members of the South Korean National Assembly proposed bills to replace the term for "abductees to North Korea" with the term "missing persons" due to North Korea's resistance.



The picture was taken during the NKHR's interviews with ED victims in Japan.

h. Timor-Leste

1. COMMEMORATION OF TRADITIONAL ACTIVITIES: HAK commemorated the International Week of the Disappeared.
2. REUNIFICATION OF STOLEN CHILDREN: HAK worked for the search of the victims' families of stolen children and coordinated with Dili-working team for family reunions of ED victims—HAK provided training or briefing to the Dili-working team for providing psychosocial support.
3. HUMAN RIGHTS FILM FESTIVAL: In the month of May, HAK organized a film festival on human rights. The festival was launched on 18 May in Dili and coincided with historically important date of 20 May (the Restoration of Independence in Timor-Leste). The movies screened were *Labarik Lakon ho Familia* (Stolen Children and their Families), "Memoria" (Memory), "Desizaun" (Decision). The movie *Labarik Lakon ho Familia* (Stolen Children and their Families) shows how the East Timorese Truth and Reconciliation Commission, CAVR, found that more than 4,000 children were taken by members of the Indonesian military during the occupation. Many were used by the military to support their campaign against the East Timorese, and were then forcibly taken across the border to Indonesia, without their families knowing what had happened to them. This film documents the reunion of



Family Reunions of Stolen Children

some of these stolen children with their families on 16-26 May 2016, as part of an initiative by a collective of organizations, including HAK.

i. Sri Lanka

1. **COMMEMORATION OF TRADITIONAL ACTIVITIES.** FOD, in partnership with the Office on Missing Persons (OMP), commemorated the International Day of the Disappeared last August 30 in Colombo. Chair Deepika Udagama of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka served as the Guest Speaker. The OMP Presidential Council Chair, on the other hand, presented an interim report proposing financial assistance, among several other suggestions. A mother of a disappeared soldier and other women family members of the disappeared spoke during the event, expressing their grief and concern regarding the crime of ED. In the evening, FOD took part in the commemorative event, but it also held a press conference in the morning at Vihara Maha Devi Park. In the said conference, FOD President Brito Fernando along with several other mothers expressed their satisfaction now that the state is not only recognizing the crime of ED but also commemorating IDD with the victims, even bearing the theme "[We] will not allow disappearances [to] happen again." Despite the positive developments that the state has shown now, the members of FOD remain vigilant and steadfast in calling for truth, justice, redress, and reparation; especially since the Presidential Commission had already promised the same kind of financial support in 1996, yet nothing had come of it. Ultimately, the victims reiterated that the Sri Lankan government must ensure that their pronouncements are translated into concrete action, as mere acknowledgement is certainly not enough to heal the wounds caused by this grave human rights violation.

j. Laos

Ms. Shui Meng Ng conducted several campaigns on the case of the disappearance of her husband, Sombath Somphone with the help of AFAD, the Sombath Initiative and several organizations. She participated in various conferences and meetings, during which she used these as venues to talk about the enforced disappearance of her husband, the human rights situation in Laos and the situation of ED in other Asian countries. She has garnered several acts of solidarity in the course of her crusade to find truth and justice for her husband. It is important to note that on 15 December 2018, Shui Meng and the movement against EDs in Asia and the rest of the world commemorated the 6th anniversary of the disappearance of Sombath.



Regional conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in August 2018

3. REGIONAL DOCUMENTATION

As of December 2018, the number of cases in the AFAD HURIDOCS OpenEvSys database per country is as follows:

- | | | | |
|---------------|-----|----------|----|
| 1. Bangladesh | 204 | 2. India | 79 |
|---------------|-----|----------|----|

3. Indonesia	62	7. Sri Lanka	105
4. Nepal	73	8. Thailand	26
5. Pakistan	138	9. Timor Leste	6
6. Philippines	147		

Since 2016, AFAD has had no more funding on regional documentation. As a result, except for the Philippines, whose documentation work was funded by MISEREOR, member-organizations (MOs) did not have persons working full time on documentation work. This matter is disturbing in view of the most basic need for documentation in all the other endeavors of AFAD.

This matter has to be given serious attention by the Federation and the MOs in the next period.

III. AFAD 20th ANNIVERSARY: FIGHT TO BE FREE: DECADE 3



AFAD ushered in its 20th anniversary through a combination of public events, commemorative activities, and internal meetings. The activities include the following: Kite Flying during the last day of the International Week of the Disappeared; AFAD Council Meeting; Roundtable Discussion on the UN Convention on Enforced Disappearance; A Musical, entitled *Pagsambang Bayan* or People's Worship depicting the horrors of the Philippine Martial Law and relating it with the present sorry state of human rights in the country; Country staff meeting, Press Briefing and meeting of members of the

International Coalition Against Enforced Disappearances (ICAED). Held on 31 May to 8 June, all the activities were successfully conducted with the participation of all AFAD members, the AFAD Secretariat and representatives of partners of the NHRF in Colombia, Mexico, and Indonesia. AFAD Argentinian partners also participated.

The networking created during the meeting between AFAD MOs and the NFHR partners enabled the network to plan together and to eventually support each other in the future. The internal meetings of AFAD which had planning components included protection of human rights defenders. The ICAED meetings resulted in a bigger meeting of ICAED MOs which later occurred in September 2018 at the UN in Geneva. During which, the situation of human rights defenders was discussed with the



UN Special Rapporteur for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders. Such a meeting is one of the important immediate results of the meetings in the Philippines during AFAD's 20th-anniversary events.

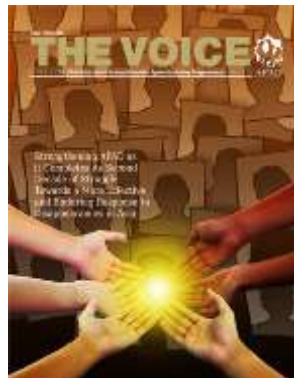
The planning that was necessary for the substantiation of the proposal then for submission to one of AFAD's existing partners, the Bread for the World included a substantial portion on the protection of human rights defenders especially in areas where their situation is perilous, e.g. in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Kashmir. Planning on urgent actions cases were done. The NFHR, through its representative, Ms. Liv Kvanvig, was able to shed light on its mandate. Ms. Kvanvig invited AFAD MOs to participate in an online campaign of NFHR to make visible the lives and works of human rights defenders. Some of the

AFAD MOs including AFAD leaders, participated in the said campaign. The Press Briefing also mentioned not only the phenomenon of EDs regionally and globally but also the situation of human rights defenders in the Philippines where the events took place and in the countries where the participants came from.

There were/are no hard and fast solutions to the difficult situation of human rights defenders, but the solidarity and camaraderie forged during the events would in no small measure go a long way to better responses to their situations in the future, especially in the event of reprisals and persecution.

See link to one of the interviews with NKHR with AFAD leaders: <https://app.memria.org/stories/public-story-view/3bfad99f3f2b47219e2e0dc0a769b053/?source=facebook&fbclid=IwAR2czT2U-4NUcoe3mg3v-bKtZRTtofXoaYUOYPgzcd0W15K7FK3HmPycAAk>

IV. PUBLICATIONS AND STATEMENTS



AFAD was able to publish the following in 2018:

1. March 2018 issue of The Voice - the issue contains among other things, various articles in countries where AFAD MOs are based, a photo essay on the breakthrough on the reunification of stolen children with their biological parents, AFAD's and FIND's position paper on the ICCPED, a movie review on Sombath Somphone and some literary pieces. It comprehensively depicts the updated situation of EDs in Asia, with focus on countries where AFAD MOs are based.
2. Special Anniversary issue of The Voice - the issue contains messages, articles, pictures and other literary pieces depicting the commemoration of AFAD's 20th anniversary. It also includes photos of activities conducted during the event.

Links of the downloadable publications:

- a. <https://www.afad-online.org/resources/the-voice/408-march-2018-issue-the-voice>
- b. <https://www.afad-online.org/resources/the-voice/441-fight-to-be-free-decade-3>

AFAD also issued several statements during commemorative events as well as in response to burning issues on EDs in its scope of work. See links to the statements below:

1. Sowing Disrespect, Hindering Justice: AFAD Condemns India for Prohibiting APDP to Pay its Respects to Atta Mohammed Khan 6th February 2018
<https://www.afad-online.org/news/10-statements/402-sowing-disrespect-hinderingjustice-afad-condemns-india-for-prohibiting-apdp-to-pay-its-respects-to-atta-mohammed-khan>
2. AFAD Commemorates the International Women’s Day, 2018, 8th March 2018
<https://www.afad-online.org/news/10-statements/407-afad-commemorates-international-women-s-day-2018>
3. AFAD's message to KontraS' 20th Anniversary, 20th March 2018
<https://www.afad-online.org/news/10-statements/409-afad-s-message-to-kontras-20th-anniversary>
4. AFAD Commemorates the International Day for the Right to Truth Concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims
<https://www.afad-online.org/news/10-statements/410-afad-commemorates-the-international-day-for-the-right-to-truth-concerning-gross-human-rights-violations-and-for-the-dignity-of-victims>
5. The Easter Experience: A Testament of Hope that Springs Eternal In the Search for Truth and Justice
<https://www.afad-online.org/news/10-statements/411-the-easter-experience-a-testament-of-hope-that-springs-eternal-in-the-search-for-truth-and-justice>
6. AFAD Remembers and Pays a Tribute to Aasia Jeelani on her 14th Martyrdom Anniversary
<https://www.afad-online.org/news/10-statements/414-afad-remembers-and-pays-a-tribute-to-aasia-jeelani-on-her-18th-martyrdom-anniversary>
7. AFAD Remembers the Victims of Thai Black Day on the 26th Anniversary
<https://www.afad-online.org/news/10-statements/415-afad-remembers-the-victims-of-thai-black-day-on-the-26th-anniversary>
8. AFAD Commemorates the International Week of the Disappeared, 2018
<https://www.afad-online.org/news/10-statements/417-afad-commemorates-the-international-week-of-the-disappeared-2018>
9. AFAD Commemorates the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture
<https://www.afad-online.org/news/10-statements/422-afad-commemorates-the-international-day-in-support-of-victims-of-torture>
10. Devotion Amid Adversity: Remembering Fr. Rudy Romano’s 33rd Year of Disappearance
<https://www.afad-online.org/news/10-statements/425-devotion-amid-adversity-remembering-fr-rudy-romano-s-33rd-year-of-disappearance>
11. AFAD Condemns the Statements of Lao Government about Sombath and his Family and Demands Apology 20th July 2018
<https://www.afad-online.org/news/10-statements/428-afad-condemns-the-statements-of-lao-government-about-sombath-and-his-family-and-demands-apology>

12. AFAD Seeks Truth and Justice for Masood Janjua and his Family on the 13th Year of his Disappearance
<https://www.afad-online.org/news/10-statements/429-afad-seeks-truth-and-justice-for-masood-janjua-and-his-family-on-the-13th-year-of-his-disappearance>
13. AFAD Commemorates the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances
<https://www.afad-online.org/news/10-statements/431-afad-commemorates-the-international-day-of-the-victims-of-enforced-disappearances>
14. AFAD Remembers its Former Chairperson Munir Said Thalib on his Death Anniversary and Seeks Justice for Him
<https://www.afad-online.org/news/10-statements/433-afad-remembers-its-former-chairperson-munir-said-thalib-on-his-death-anniversary-and-seeks-justice-for-him>
15. The Verdict on Palparan’s Case: A Glimmer of Hope in these Dark Times
<https://www.afad-online.org/news/10-statements/434-the-verdict-on-palparan-s-case-a-glimmer-of-hope-in-these-dark-times>
16. Reflecting on Lessons of the Past
<https://www.afad-online.org/news/10-statements/435-reflecting-on-lessons-of-the-past>
17. AFAD Expresses Concern over the Election of India, Philippines and Bangladesh in the United Nations Human Rights Council
<https://www.afad-online.org/news/10-statements/437-afad-expresses-concern-over-the-election-of-india-philippines-and-bangladesh-in-the-united-nations-human-rights-council>
18. AFAD Expresses Concern over the Intimidation of its Member Organization – Odhikar in Bangladesh
<https://www.afad-online.org/news/10-statements/438-afad-expresses-concern-over-the-intimidation-of-its-member-organization-odhikar-in-bangladesh>
19. AFAD remembers Bangladeshi Diplomat Maroof Zaman on the 1st Anniversary of his Disappearance
<https://www.afad-online.org/news/10-statements/439-afad-remembers-bangladeshi-diplomat-marooof-zaman-on-the-1st-anniversary-of-his-disappearance>
20. AFAD Commemorates Human Rights Day
<https://www.afad-online.org/news/10-statements/440-afad-commemorates-human-rights-day>
21. AFAD Seeks the Truth about Sombath Somphone
<https://www.afad-online.org/news/10-statements/442-afad-seeks-the-truth-about-sombath-somphone>

V. PARTICIPATION IN ACTIVITIES OF OTHER RELATED ORGANIZATIONS

AFAD participated in several activities of related civil society organizations in the Asian region. These include, among other things, the following activities:

1. International Conference on EDs in Asia held on 30 August, 2018 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia - This was hosted by a newly formed organization, CAGED, which is an organization relatively recently formed in order to respond to the phenomenon of EDs in Malaysia. AFAD MOs from the Philippines, Laos, Indonesia, and Bangladesh were invited to participate in the event.
2. In August 2018, the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy conducted a fellowship for young people of which one of the AFAD campaign country staff applied and was admitted. Bikash Basnet, AFAD Country Staff in Advocacy Forum in Nepal said that the program was fruitful and contextual as it was rich in content and intersectional issues. Furthermore, it provided a platform for building networks among the participants and human rights organizations for sharing of best practices in human rights promotion and protection and democratic process.



To note, the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy gave the 2016 Asian Human Rights and Democracy Award to AFAD.

3. Innovation for Change invited AFAD representatives to send delegates to two of their activities:
 - 3.1. From 27-28 February 2018, together with some 30 participants across Asia, Ng Shui Meng attended a Reflection Retreat organized by Innovation for Change-East Asia entitled *Renew, Reclaim, Resist: Pondering Strategies, Counter-strategies to Protect Civic Space*. It drew together activists, academics, youth leaders to reflect, share, and strategize together on combat and protect the shrinking civil space across the various countries in Asia. She was there, together with Celia Sevilla of FIND/AFAD to share their experiences as victims of enforced disappearance and to raise awareness of ED in their region. It was clear that the issue of EDs is often not even on the radar screen of Human Rights Activists, unless they are specifically working on issues of ED. Through the workshop, she was able to link in to other HR activists outside of the AFAD network.

3.2. The Innovation for Change-East Asia Team held their Campaign Accelerator Training (CAT) on November 4-6, 2018 and their Annual Strategy Meeting (ASM) on November 8-10, 2018 in Penang, Malaysia. The CAT used action-based learning and team building in creating campaigns using the latest campaign planning approaches based on the needs and focus of the participants. Divided into several groups, the participants came up with their own campaign plans and strategies at the end of the workshop. In the ASM, identified top priorities of the East Asia hub including disinformation, LGBTI rights, digital security and other human rights issues were revisited. From these, goals and outcome for 2019 were set. Inputs on governance structure and membership system of the East Asia community were also discussed.



3. October 2018 - The AFAD Secretary-General gave a series of lectures for one week in the Chomnan University in Gwangju, South Korea upon the invitation of the May 18 Memorial Foundation. She gave series of lectures on the global phenomenon of EDs; on the disappearances in Asia; disappearances in the Philippines, the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearance. The audience were 7 graduate school students from different parts of Asia.



4. December 2018 - Again, upon the invitation of the May 18 Foundation, the AFAD Secretary-General participated as a presenter in a conference on the Asian Human Rights Charter. She was one of the two presentors on the human rights situation in the Philippines, with focus on civil and political rights vis-a-vis the Philippine Constitution.



V1. SWOT Analysis

At the beginning of 2019, the AFAD Secretariat, in the presence of the AFAD Chairperson and Council members based in the Philippines conducted a year end assessment for 2018 and planning for 2019. The Federation reckons that the year 2018 was a productive year for AFAD in terms of the concretization of its mission, vision and goals.

2018 is historical for AFAD in view of the commemoration of AFAD's 20th anniversary. It was participated in not only by its MOs, but also by its network in Latin America and by the Norwegian Human Rights Fund. The series of activities were conducted in the country where the Federation was founded with the participation of former leaders of the Federation who, in no small measure, contributed to the growth of the Federation.

Under the leadership of the AFAD Council and the Executive Council and with the coordination and service role of the AFAD Secretariat, the MOs were able to respond to the national phenomenon of ED as it will give solidarity to co-MOs which are undergoing similar problems in their respective countries.

At the regional level, cooperation was made possible through the regional and international campaign and lobby work coordinated by the AFAD Secretariat. Joint trainings were conducted, synchronized activities were simultaneously held during traditionally coordinated events. These were made possible amidst precarious human rights situation in South Asian countries, especially in Bangladesh, the disputed-state of Jammu and Kashmir, Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

At the international level, AFAD remained to be a credible organization working on EDs. Its MOs were able to send cases to the UNWGEID and was able to verify the status of the said cases. Moreover, despite the limitation that States of AFAD MOs have not ratified the ICCPED, AFAD was able to participate in the meeting of the UN Committee on EDs

AFAD also maintained its being the focal point of the International Coalition Against Enforced Disappearances (ICAED). It facilitated the conduct of 8 electronic meetings during the year and conducted. It also maximized its AFAD 20th anniversary by convening a meeting of ICAED MOs present during the activities. The said event resulted in the conduct of an Annual General Meeting of ICAED MOs held in Geneva and the conduct of meetings with Special Procedures and other international organizations based in Geneva. It was able to hold its own side event with the participation with MOs from Asia, Latin America, Africa, Europe and North America. Moreover, it started the process of registering ICAED as a Swiss Association.

In terms of funding, in view of the termination of the majority of its projects at the end of 2018, AFAD was able to write proposals and submitted them to the following:

1. **Bread for the World/Protestant Development Service** - A three-year proposal on regional and international and regional campaign, lobby, and documentation work was submitted with the participation of MOs and with the guidance of CTI, the consulting firm of Bread for the World. On 5 December 2018, the said proposal was approved. A contract for immediate implementation at the beginning of 2019 was signed and submitted to Bread for the World. The three-year project is titled: **“Enhancing the Victims’ Collective and Sustained Response to Enforced Disappearance.”**
2. **DKA, Austria** - A three-year proposal on administration and management work of the Federation was submitted to DKA in Austria. The said proposal was approved in December 2018 and a contract was signed and submitted for immediate implementation at the beginning of 2019. The three-year project is titled: **“Support to AFAD’s Leadership, Management and Secretariat Work to Complement its Comprehensive Advocacy Against EDs in Asia.”**

3. **Women World Day of Prayer** - A one-year proposal on the Participation of Women Family Members of the Disappeared on Documentation was prepared and submitted. The said proposal was approved before the end of 2018. A contract was signed for immediate implementation at the beginning of 2019. The one-year project will be implemented by three MOs of AFAD from Nepal, the Philippines and Bangladesh, respectively under the coordination of the AFAD Secretariat. The title of the project is: “**Developing Sustained Women’s Participation in AFAD’s Research, Documentation, and Psychosocial Support.**”
4. **Norwegian Human Rights Fund** (NHRF)– AFAD was able to receive a support of Twenty Thousand US Dollars for additional funding for the series of activities to commemorate its 20th anniversary. It helped in getting the participation of NHRF partners in Mexico, Colombia and Indonesia and an additional participation of an ICAED member in Argentina. It enabled AFAD to also convene those members of ICAED who were present during the activity.
5. **Swedish Amnesty Fund** - AFAD facilitated funding from the Swedish Amnesty Fund for the participation of ICAED activities with UN bodies in Geneva and a face to face meeting of the ICAED Steering Committee. The face to face meeting is part of the process of registering ICAED as a Swiss Association. An amount of Ten Thousand US Dollars was sent in the amount of Eleven Thousand Nine Hundred Eighty Two.
6. **MISEREOR** – A proposal was sent to MISEREOR at the end of September but as of this writing, the said proposal is still being reviewed. Decision from MISEREOR will be made in June 2019.

In terms of weaknesses, one clear aspect of work which AFAD was unable to do in 2018 is the encoding of cases into AFAD’s regional data-base. The data-base, using the Open Evsys system, is being hosted by HURIDOCS. While some MOs were able to conduct field documentation, the cases documented of both in the past and recently have not been encoded. There is no person at the regional level in charge of the matter, but even then, the MOs should have continued the process of encoding .

Another perceived weakness is still the uneven capacity of MOs to respond to communications. While it is a given reality that the MOs are busy with their work in their respective countries, prompt communications are desired in a regional federation where MOs are geographically distant from each other and distant from the Secretariat. While improved, compliance in submitting prompt reports remains a challenge to some MOs.

AFAD has a number of opportunities to continue its work. Such include the following:

- Its 20 years of experience in working for a world without *desaparecidos*;
- Its good contacts with UN bodies that work on enforced disappearances in particular and in human rights in general;
- Its continuing support from its funding partners and the possibility to explore further other partners to respond to the increasing demands of the work;
- It has received an international human rights award from the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy and its current leaders had received individual human rights awards from international agencies.

- AFAD is the only regional federation in Asia that works on the theme of enforced disappearances, whose relevance due to the ongoing regional phenomenon of enforced disappearances, is unfortunately .
- AFAD MOs work very actively in their respective countries and are effective and credible in their field of work.

In view of the present precarious human rights situation in several Asian countries including the Philippines which is the country of base of the Federation, one major threat is the threat to the lives of human rights defenders. AFAD human rights defenders, especially in South Asian countries, continue receive threats of persecution, their funding are being withheld and implementation of projects are affected. It is important that strict security measures be observed by AFAD MOs and the Secretariat.

VII. CONCLUSION



In conclusion, on its 20th anniversary, the Federation continued in its long and arduous journey for a world without *desaparecidos*. There have been some breakthroughs in the course of the journey. The number of stolen children in Indonesia reunified with their families in Timor-Leste had reached 73 at the end of the year. There was already a domestic initially discussed for drafting` in Pakistan in 2018. This is a good news in a country with the highest daily occurrences of enforced disappearances cases. Despite the dismal human rights situation in the Philippines, a human rights defenders' bill was passed on first reading by the Philippine House of Representatives. These are small victories which, like ripples, can generate grand victories for the sake of the disappeared and their families.

Much remains to be done to update, expand and push the continuing process of documentation work which serves as a strong foundation for all other endeavors of the Federation. As AFAD receives some support for documentation from Bread for the World in the next years to come, this aspect of work has to be taken serious consideration.

Not much has been done to do psychosocial empowerment for the families of the disappeared, taking into consideration that the families of the victims play the central role in the search for truth and justice. AFAD and its MOs have to look for ways and means to take priority consideration to this primordial need.

As AFAD enters its third decade of struggle for a world without *desaparecidos*, enforced disappearances in many countries remains prevalent. The gargantuan task of rendering the work of AFAD irrelevant remains a seemingly unreachable dream. But the struggle continues, no matter what the cost.