

Media advisory

Civil Society Demands Transparency and Consultation on the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration

8th April 2012

In a joint statement released today, over 100 civil society organizations and networks across the ASEAN region have called for the release of the draft ASEAN Human Rights Declaration and the initiation of meaningful public consultations on its content. The Declaration is being drafted by the ASEAN Inter-governmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), which is meeting in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, April 9-11, 2012.

The draft has been in development for nearly a year, but has not yet been released to the public.

Civil society has been largely excluded from the drafting process as well. Only the AICHR representatives of Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand have solicited input from civil society on the historic Declaration. Meanwhile, civil society organizations that have submitted recommendations on the Declaration have received no official response from the AICHR.

“The peoples of ASEAN, whose human rights the Declaration is supposed to uphold, are being left in the dark,” said Yap Swee Seng, the Executive Director of Bangkok based Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA). “They are not being given any meaningful way to ensure that their concerns are presented, received and reflected in the Declaration.

“This threatens to fundamentally undermine the legitimacy of the Declaration.”

The joint statement also calls upon AICHR to implement specific steps to ensure that the process of drafting the Declaration will be credible, inclusive, transparent, reflective and consistent with universal human rights standards. These steps include the immediate release of the draft, public consultations, and the translation of the draft into national and local languages.

“Consultations without a draft of the AHRD at hand are meaningless, and a Declaration adopted without meaningful and broad-based consultations will not be legitimate,” said Dr. Pung Chhiv Kek, President of LICADHO. “ASEAN and AICHR risk making themselves an outcast among regional organizations if they ignore civil society and impose a Declaration drafted without public input.”

The joint statement has so far been endorsed by 122 organizations and networks representing a wide range of sectors in ASEAN member states, including youth organizations, women’s organizations, child rights organizations, LGBT organizations, migrant workers network organizations, labour unions, farmers organizations, environmental organizations, human rights organizations, development organizations and some academic institutions.

The AHRD is widely predicted to be adopted at the 45th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) in July in Phnom Penh. “The AICHR should postpone its submission of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration to the AMM in July if no meaningful public consultations were held in the finalization of this document,” said Haris Azhar, coordinator of the Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence of Indonesia (Kontras).

Media contact persons for English:

Yap Swee Seng , Executive Director, Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA), +66 (0) 818689178

Aung Myo Min, Director and Founder, Human Rights Education Institute of Burma (HREIB), + 66 (0) 819925293

Dr. Pung Chhiv Kek, President, Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO), + 855 (0) 12589091

Mr. Haris Azhar, Coordinator, Kontras, Indonesia, + 62 (0) 815-13302342

Media contact persons for other languages:

Name of contact persons	Country	Organizations	Mobile phone	Emails
Mr. Aung Myo Min	Burma/Myanmar	Human Rights Education Institute of Burma (HREIB)	+ 66 (0)8199 25 293	myominburma@gmail.com
Ms. Khin Ohmar	Burma/Myanmar	Burma Partnership	+66 (0) 8188 40772	khinohmar@burmapartnership.org
Mr. Ou Virak	Cambodia	Cambodian Center for Human Rights	+ 855 (0) 12404051	ouvirak@cchrcambodia.org
Mr. Haris Azhar	Indonesia	Kontras	+ 62 (0) 815-13302342	haris_azhar@yahoo.com
Ms. Vanida S. Thephsouvanh	Laos (based in France)	Lao Movement for Human Rights	+33 (0) 607945840	midh@midh-lao.org
Ms. Enalini Ellumalai	Malaysia	Suara Rakyat Malaysia	+60 (0) 19 3758912	enalini_elumalai@yahoo.com
Mr. Ryan Silverio	Philippines	Child Rights Coalition-Asia	+ 63 (0) 917 8797710	rsilverio@childrightscoalitionasia.org
Mr. Tan Kong Soon	Singapore	Think Centre-Singapore	+ 65 (0) 91 077 905	t_kong_soon@hotmail.com
Ms. Sirada Khemanittathai	Thailand	People's Empowerment Foundation	+ 66 (0) 89696 6286	n.sirada@gmail.com
Ms. An Phong	Viet Nam	Boat People SOS	+66 (0) 80 118 4729 or 0801 184 729	anphong.vo@bpsos.org