



Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD)

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AFAD COMMEMORATES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2017

Manila, 8 March 2017 – Today, on International Women's Day, the Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD) pays homage to all women. We particularly remember all women who have been victims of enforced disappearance—those who were disappeared, and those suffering from the disappearance of a loved one.

In many Asian countries, men are traditionally the breadwinners of the family; as a result of their disappearances women suffer from social stigma, discrimination and have to bear the brunt of raising the children on their own.

In the absence of the breadwinner of the family, women and children not only suffer emotionally, but their economic situation also becomes precarious. Indeed, when suddenly forced to work for a living due to the enforced disappearance of the husband, many women are traumatized, distressed, and unable to earn enough to meet her own and her family's basic needs.

Moreover, due to societal norms and family pressure, some women face the difficult choice of severing ties with their families and friends but being able to work, or give up working and become completely dependent on their relatives.

As recognized by the UN Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID), enforced disappearances are lived and faced in different ways by women and girls due to gender roles, which are deeply embedded in history, tradition, religion and culture.

Despite all the difficulties faced by women victims of this crime, women are often at the forefront of the struggle against enforced disappearances, being wives, mothers, sisters and human rights defenders at the same time.

In AFAD, women have played a major role in the struggle against enforced disappearances.

The first Chairperson of AFAD, Ms. Cecilia Lagman, was a mother of a disappeared in the Philippines. Moreover, from her own initiative of founding FIND, many other women family members of the disappeared continue her struggle for a world without disappeared people.

Similarly, Ms. Tuti Koto was a living example of a victim turned to human rights defender. Until the very end of her life, she never gave up searching for her disappeared son and for many other disappeared sons and daughters in Indonesia, whom she considered her own. Her advocacy became an inspiration for many activists in Indonesia.

Other women have given their lives claiming truth and justice for victims of human rights violations. An example is Ms. Aasia Jeelani, of APDP Kashmir, who died in a bomb attack while on her way to an independent election monitoring activity at Kupwara, Kashmir.

Today, AFAD pays tribute to the strength of all women, to those who have played a major role in the past and to those who continue their struggle for truth and justice, despite economic restrictions and emotional sufferings.

Signed by,

KHURRAM PARVEZ
Chairperson

MARY AILEEN D. BACALSO
Secretary-General