



Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances

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Urgent Call to Action: Safeguard Human Rights in the Face of Increasing Cases of Enforced Disappearances

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The Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD) joins the global human rights community in commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The theme for the year-long initiative, "Freedom, Equality and Justice for All," echoes the values enshrined in the UDHR and emphasizes the ongoing efforts to protect and expand human rights globally.

We have gone a long way since we were shown the extent to which dictators and demagogues can further an agenda, disrespecting and neglecting our basic rights and liberties. Still, we are in a time when human rights play second fiddle to geopolitical agenda, shrouded in diplomatic language, and treated as an expendable negotiation piece to further economic gains within a neo-liberal backdrop.

Freedom, Equality, and Justice for All, while indelibly enshrined in the UDHR is a welcome call. Unless concrete, sincere, and genuine action is taken, however, it becomes a mere balm that gives more time for perpetrators of human rights violations to pursue their agenda with impunity.

It is, indeed, distressing to note that, to this day, human rights defenders (HRD) face persecution, and cases of enforced disappearance persistently cast a shadow over the principles of human rights. In recent times leading to 2023, AFAD has witnessed the grim reality that harassment and reprisals against HRDs persist. Enforced disappearance, a gruesome crime condemned under international law, remains to be the go-to response of authoritarian States against lawful dissent. This is evidenced by cases on the rise in countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, the Philippines, to name a few. The promise of dignity and equality is under a sustained assault, 75 years after.

AFAD calls for global adherence to UDHR, and for the international community to come together to end impunity and hold erring states accountable for the enforced disappearance of its citizens. The Federation denounces the persistent culture of impunity and the lack of accountability that allows enforced disappearances to continue. We urgently call upon the global community to unite against enforced disappearance and the persecution of HRDs. The principles of the UDHR must not be mere words on paper but a living reality for every individual. Let us pledge to protect, not persecute, those who champion human rights, and work collectively towards a future where the ideals of the UDHR are upheld without compromise.

**Stop Enforced Disappearances.
Protection, not persecution, of human rights defenders.**


Joey Faustino
Secretary General

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