

Asian civil society organizations concerned over scrapping of Indonesia's direct local elections and suppression of freedom of assembly during Bali Democracy Forum

Statement in Conjunction with the 2014 Bali Civil Society Forum and Bali Democracy Forum

Bali, Indonesia / 9 October 2014

The Asian Democracy Network (ADN) expresses our deep concern in solidarity with 11 Indonesian civil society organisations (CSOs) that the controversial passage of the Regional Elections Law by the National Assembly on 26 September 2014 is a serious setback for democracy in Indonesia and affects negatively the Indonesian reputation as a champion of democracy in Asia recent years.

People in Indonesia cannot exercise their democratic right to elect their own local district heads, mayors and governors, if this law is implemented, as local legislative councils will appoint them directly. It is not acceptable as it is against the fundamental human rights principle of non-retrogression.

Many Indonesian CSOs in order to express their anger and opposition clearly, have decided not to participate in the first Bali Civil Society Forum (BCSF) taking place on 8-9 Oct. in Bali, prior to the 7th inter-governmental Bali Democracy Forum (BDF) on 10-11 Oct. 2014.

The ADN further deplores the suppression of the right to freedom of assembly as stated by the Bali Deputy Police Chief Gen. IGN Raharja Subyakta on 7 October 2014, banning all rallies during the BDF. We consider the freedom of assembly to be one of the cornerstones of democratic society, which is necessary to enable people to participate in any democratic processes in a free, active and meaningful manner. Such a ban should be withdrawn immediately.

The ADN, a civil society-led platform of democracy advocates and human rights defenders dedicated to the strengthening of democracy and human rights in Asia, attaches great importance to dialogue and civic engagement with the governments and other stake-holders for the promotion of democracy and strengthening of democratic governance in the Asia and Pacific region.

Therefore, we value the BDF as a unique space for dialogue on democracy among political leaders and governments in the region, and such an important initiative need to further strengthened in the future by making it more inclusive and participatory.

In this regard, we would like to call on the new government of the 7th President of Indonesia, Joko Widodo to create more spaces and institutional mechanisms, building on the BDF experiences for the last 7 years, for dialogue as well as action with substantive programs in partnership with civil society for advancing democracy in the region.

We will spare no effort to work with the new President to realize such a vision.

In solidarity,

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