DEMOCRACY ASSEMBLY 2021
CONFRONTING DEMOCRATIC REGRESSION
AND RECLAIMING CIVIC SPACE
Virtual Conference

INTRODUCTION:
Currently, Asia is suffering from a worsening of human rights due to the regression of democracy in the region. With an increasing number of countries recording shrinking civic-space, we are directly witnessing the suppression of Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), threats to media freedom, manipulation of democratic institutions, and a rise of repressive laws resulting in human rights violations. States continue to ignore their responsibility towards principles of human rights and democracy by consolidating their power utilizing the pandemic as an excuse. We are seeing this happen in plain sight because of a weak global democracy leadership and limited number of international bodies' ability to sanction these bad states. The recent military coup in Myanmar that was followed by a brutal and bloodiest crackdown of the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) despite international condemnation, is a clear example of democratic regress in the region.

Strong democracy advocates such as India, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, and Indonesia are experiencing their own respective challenges to democracy and human rights, limiting strong democracy allies to coordinate a regional movement. Within this absence of a strong unified democratic movement, we are seeing a free playground for countries like Cambodia, Thailand, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan to remain hostile to human rights defenders as well as independent media actors.

Nevertheless, civil society organizations (CSOs) and pro-democracy allies continue to respond to these democracy threats. However, with the challenges and limitations brought on by the pandemic the current efforts are not enough to remedy democratic regression. Rather, it is exacerbated with authoritarians and dictators in the region acting swiftly and learning from each other their sophisticated tactics to strangle the movement.

To deal with this across the border authoritarianism CSOs should initiate a new strategy that confronts regression directly. We must be innovative and creative in uniting our regional strength through an inclusive movement from all fronts and aspects of democracy advocacy in Asia. Therefore, the ADN aims to facilitate an event in the form of a democracy assembly for pro-democrats in the region to develop a forward strategy for the democratic movement in Asia through interdisciplinary discussion of democracy.

ABOUT THE DEMOCRACY ASSEMBLY:
The Asia Democracy Network since its establishment in 2013, has continuously worked to provide platforms for democracy actors in Asia to come together to create a network of an offense to threats to democracy as well as celebrate and strengthen the democratic wins in the region. The Democracy Assembly will be comprehensive of our work thus far, and aims to achieve a more impactful consolidated regional response to the regress of democracy in Asia. We will invite prominent democracy advocates as well as core civil society members in

Organizers:
ADN’s network from various thematic sectors to come together to have a constructive dialogue on how to map action for progress. The highlight of the assembly will be that the essence of the discussions will be pulled from sub-regional consultations that we will conduct a month prior with focus groups of democracy actors. With the findings of the consultations we will kick off the assembly with planning action immediately. As a result of the two day assembly, we aim to highlight various issues and map attainable actions by civil society to respond to democracy regression by releasing a Asia regional commitment to democracy and human rights. In a region, where more authoritarians than democrats are in power it is vital that the civil society of the region band together and in unison commit to progressing and defending democracy.

Asia Regional Democracy Consolidation – Conference Communiqué 2019

OBJECTIVES

- Strengthen solidarity of civil society in Asia for democracy and human rights
- Strengthen democratic unity of advocates in Asia
- Produce a recommitment of civil society in Asia to protect and defend democracy and human rights in Asia
- Build a roadmap to push back on regression of democracy

PROGRAM PROCEEDINGS

The program will be held virtually to include hundreds of pro-democrats in the region and to maximize diverse participation. We will solicit information sharing and exchange from experts and practitioners in the region.

The event will be divided into two major activities detailed below:

1. Roadmap to Democracy Assembly – Sub-regional Consultations

Leading up to the 2021 Democracy Assembly, we will be implementing preliminary consultations divided sub-regionally. To better consolidate information as well as maximize input from diverse actors on the regress of democracy, we will hold these separate discussions in Southeast Asia¹, South Asia², and North-East-Central-Asia³, respectively. Around 50 (fifty) democracy actors are expected to attend each sub-regional session to share their concerns, and their suggestions on ways to confront the authoritarians and democracy regressions. The schedule for the sub-region consultation is listed below:

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¹ Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Vietnam.
² Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.
³ Republic of Korea, Taiwan, Japan, Mongolia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan

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Organizers:
Confronting authoritarian and democracy regression—Subregional session

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schedule</th>
<th>Sub-regional</th>
<th>Host</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 10</td>
<td>Southeast Asia</td>
<td>ADN</td>
<td>NGOs, CBOs, Media, MPs, Donors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 11</td>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>ADN</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>August 12</td>
<td>North/East/Central–East Asia</td>
<td>ADN</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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During the Sub-regional consultation diverse CSOs will be invited to discuss a common topic posed by the ADN secretariat, which is “Finding a way to address and confronting democracy regression: recommendations from multi-sectoral organizations.”

The outcome of the sub-regional consultations will be the building blocks to develop a regional roadmap to creating a democratic unity front in Asia. A final regional outcome will be then summarized and be presented during the main event of the Asia Democracy Assembly.

2. 2021 Democracy Assembly – Regional Convening

Date: November 23–24, 2021 at 4pm Korea Standard Time

This will be the main event where all parties will convene to share the sub-regional summaries and to further deepen deliberation in sharpening a common regional strategy.

Outcomes: Enhance unity and solidarity among civil society, increase awareness, widen connection, and cooperation to promote and defend democracy.

Output: The event is expected to produce two documents which are:

i) A roadmap and commitment of civil society organizations (CSOs) to confront democracy regression in Asia to be circulated among CSOs in the region to navigate their future advocacies and solidarity task, and

iii) A statement and open letter to the inter-governmental bodies, democracy champion governments (mainly U.S. and Europe), and donor institutions to further support CSOs in confronting authoritarianism and regression.

COLLABORATION
ADN welcomes cooperation and collaboration of the CSOs, Donors, and other institutions to co-organize the event. ADN will invite potential partners and make a public call for the CSOs to be involved as co-organizers partially or the entire program design and proceedings to bring participation and inclusion.

More information: ADN@adnasia.org

Organizers: