

Asia Democracy Network
ANNUAL REPORT
2022



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2022

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Asia Democracy Network

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www.adnasia.org

CONTENTS

1	About ADN	1
2	Message from the Secretariat	3
3	People of ADN	4
4	Programs: ADN 2022 at a Glance	6
	I. Movement through Narratives and Community Research	6
	II. National and Regional Democracy Consolidation: Road to Renewing Democracy	10
	III. Sustaining the Democracy Movement	14
	IV. Working Together for Local Democracy	19
	V. Responding to Regional Democracy Crisis	20
	VI. Media Intervention and Cooperation	25
	VII. New Members and Organizational Highlights	28
5	Financial Report	30
	Annex 1	31

1

ABOUT ADN

The Asia Democracy Network (ADN) is a civil society led multi stakeholder platform dedicated to bringing all aspects of society in Asia together to promote and defend democracy and human rights as a collective. ADN is a network of networks consisting of members that are regional networks that work on diverse themes under the umbrella of democracy. We have 11 network members and over 300 national members. As a network, we aim to promote democratic unity, solidarity, and cultivate the next generation of advocates to sustain the democracy movement.

Around 2010, democracy activists came together recognizing the need for a regional network advocating for democracy, which would bring together like minded civil society organizations to capture and sustain the democratic gains the

region was experiencing. Taking advantage of the global gathering, the World Movement for Democracy Assembly in Lima, Peru in 2012, activists solidified the framework of what a network advocating for democracy in Asia would look like. Thereafter, early 2013 at the Community of Democracies Ministerial meeting held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, the framework was solidified, and the Asia Democracy Network officially launched on October 21, 2013, in Seoul, Korea, at the Asia Democracy Network Founding Assembly. As a result, a network created and operated by democracy advocates in Asia was born.

Since then, the ADN has had its headquarters in Seoul, Korea, with staff members located across Asia, including Thailand, Malaysia, India, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia.



2

MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARIAT

In the wake of the pandemic, efforts to confront democracy regression have gained greater urgency around the world. Despite there being no quick fix to the challenges facing democracy it is crucial to recognize the efforts of civil society organizations that have consistently demanded change. The Asia Democracy Network, plays a crucial role in consolidating democracy in Asia by providing a space for consolidation at the regional and national levels and raising awareness about the importance of working together to strengthen the future democratic movement.

This report reflects several critical interventions that ADN has initiated to foster better coordination and cooperation among democratic actors in the region. It demonstrates our commitment to meaningful engagement moving forward.

I would like to express my thanks and appreciation for the hard work and dedication demonstrated by the Secretariat team, governing council, members, and partner organizations.

I am also grateful for the support extended by our donors and wish to continue this cooperation in the future.

On behalf of Secretariat team

Ichal Supriadi

Secretary-General.

3

PEOPLE OF ADN

GOVERNING COUNCIL MEMBERS

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Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL)

William Gois

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Kaustuv Bandyopadhyay

Asia Democracy Research Network (ADRN)

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4

PROGRAMS: ADN 2022 AT A GLANCE

I. MOVEMENT THROUGH NARRATIVES AND COMMUNITY RESEARCH

The Asia Democracy Network's contribution to the democracy movement in the Asia region is to provide an open space for diverse democracy advocates, bringing them together to engage in dialogue and build solidarity.

Not only are convenings important, but the conversations must continue beyond these events and be

carried forward into our everyday lives. Therefore, ADN has extended the movement onto the online platform through the **Asia Democracy Chronicles (ADC)**, where we elevate the narratives and voices of people on the ground. Through the ADC, we aim to take these stories and empower the region to turn them into action.

The Asia Democracy Chronicles ADN's Media Platform

ASIA DEMOCRACY CHRONICLES

▲ CIVIL LIBERTIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS: THE VIEW ACROSS THE REGION ▼

Amid the slew of challenges that confronted Asia in 2022, the Asia Democracy Chronicles covered as much ground as possible by highlighting these issues. This coverage ranged from the continuing state repression of the press in countries like Thailand and elsewhere in the region, to the searing tales of suffering endured by refugees, whether in their home country (e.g., Afghanistan) from which they were forced to flee, or in their host country (e.g., Pakistan), where, as our stories showed, a new set of challenges confronted them.

The themes highlighted by ADC in its 122 original feature and analytical pieces reflected the continuing challenges faced by communities and specific sectors of societies (such as women and children), while putting a spotlight on emerging challenges and intensifying complexities that these groups face. **One of four stories** from Japan, for example, showed how systemic gender disparity was magnified during the COVID-19 pandemic as more women lost their jobs or suffered domestic abuse. We have also shown how sorely inadequate global

and regional response to certain crises that had unfounded in the region are unwittingly causing harm to communities caught in the throes of a deadly conflict. Such was the case in Myanmar, as one of our stories, “**Whither the international community**,” showed.

Elsewhere in the region, **unrelenting crackdowns** on independent media and rights-based civil society groups were a recurring theme, even as life for many was supposed to have begun its return to normalcy. Somehow, this sparked hope of a loosening of tyrants’ grip on power, two years since the pandemic broke out.

As with stories in ADC’s earlier years, we continued to show through our articles not only the heavy burdens borne by specific segments of societies, such as ethnic minorities, but also explained the precipitating and perpetuating factors, helping our readers better understand why these challenges persist.

Across the sub-regions of Asia, we have tried to show the extent of human rights sufferings, inadequacies and outright failures in public governance that are stoking widespread human rights violations. Some of our more broad-based, regional, stories such as the **unrelenting decline of democracy in Asia**, presented verifiable numbers that lent more credence to stories from the ground exposing human rights violations.

Our election stories similarly highlighted how citizens in specific parts of the region were bearing the brunt of endless political bickering alongside widely perceived flawed policies that **stacked the deck** in favor of deeply entrenched political actors.

Long-drawn out problems that at their core showed violations of fundamental rights were also the focus of some of our stories. We’ve shown, for example, how the **continued presence of the U.S. military in Okinawa**, Japan, has given rise to a segment of

the prefecture’s population in constant search of identity: the Amerasians.

In 2022 ADC also put out a number of stories about some of the raging issues confronting the region – including but not limited to **the mayhem in Myanmar**, the **desperation for survival** in Afghanistan amid Taliban rule, the **perils of being in opposition** in countries ruled by despots like Cambodia’s Hun Sen, and China’s determined efforts to **undermine democracy in Taiwan**, to name a few.

Yet for all the myriad challenges that hounded the region in 2022 – many of which show no signs of abating, we have tried to inspire hope through stories that limned citizen resilience amid tyranny and resolute efforts to push back against authoritarianism and repression of civil rights. Our piece on the **rise of digital dissent** in Sri Lanka showed how “reticent Sri Lankans (were) becoming more vocal online about their discontent with the current regime.” Still another story from the island nation tackled what could happen when citizens collectively **desperate for political reform** finally take action.

The **advent of civil disobedience** in Myanmar was a clear demonstration of how citizens, when push comes to shove, will collectively rise up to reclaim democracy. One of our stories from Hong Kong, “**Down, but not out**,” underscored the resilience of Hong Kongers, notably civil society, or how they refused to back down in the face of mainland China’s tightening grip on the region.

As we showed in 2021, the state of affairs in Asia may have been cause for despair. Yet we also endeavored to demonstrate through sundry stories that the crises gripping the region “also presented a ripe opportunity to human rights defenders across the region to rise up, link arms, and fight to reclaim the space that they lost.”

Special Feature

No laughing matter

From singers to cartoonists, a crackdown on artists all but confirms that freedom of expression is fast disappearing in Hong Kong.

by Andrew Shum — June 10, 2023 in Hong Kong, Special Feature Reading Time: 7 mins read

AA B D O



Special Feature

Is the world just watching?

As the violence in Myanmar escalates, the country's people are calling for the international community to go beyond words and act to stop the carnage.

by Jesua Lynn — May 20, 2023 in Myanmar, Special Feature Reading Time: 7 mins read

AA B D O



Asia Community Research

Raising Awareness and Understanding the Impacts of Illiberal Influence in Asia

In prioritizing the Asian narrative, ADN continues to conduct community research on key issues in the region. This intervention is unique because it is a peoples' movement led research with the

collaboration of academia, think tanks and civil society. As a regional organization, we have the privilege to connect and cooperate with diverse communities and activists from all sectors and

countries in the region. Through these interactions and our advocacy work, we are able to identify key areas that challenge democracy in the region, which then becomes the focus of our research.

Through observation of global trends and deep discussions with various stakeholders, we identified growing concern of illiberal influences in the

form of economic and social assistance that deeply impacts and threatens developing democracies in Asia. After a year of comprehensive desk research, the ADN launched its inaugural community research publication titled **China's Rise Under the Lens: Democracy and Human Rights at Risk**. The publication was officially launched on February 22, 2022, through an online event.



As a **follow up** to this report, we have undertaken a year-long investigative research focusing on key countries in the region that are particularly susceptible to the increasing influence of authoritarianism.

A team of community researchers and activists in civil society was brought together to conduct this research. The report resulting from this research is expected to be released in May 2023.

II. NATIONAL AND REGIONAL DEMOCRACY CONSOLIDATION: ROAD TO RENEWING DEMOCRACY

National Democracy Consolidation

It is difficult to conclude whether it is more effective to promote democracy through consolidation at the national or regional level. The most effective approach can only be determined through a thorough evaluation of each country's context and the strength of its democratic institutions. Countries with strong democratic institutions and proper processes to implement democratization policies have a better chance of effectively consolidating democracy at the national level. However, in countries where democratic institutions are lacking, the only viable avenue is to pursue consolidation at the regional level.

The Asia Democracy Network focuses on consolidating democracy on the national level in targeted countries. The reason for this focus on **national consolidation** is that many countries in the Asia region have a certain level of democratic institutions in place, although their effectiveness is up for question. Building off already established structures and institutions, ADN aims to consolidate civil society groups to develop a national democracy agenda that is focused and can bring about more impact. As a program that started in 2021, it has become a flagship program for ADN. In 2022, we continued to work with national partners in countries like **Pakistan, Mongolia, the Philippines, and Indonesia**.

Here are some of the highlights by country in ADN's National Democracy Consolidation program:

The Philippines

Diverse members of civil society and academia in the Philippines gathered in Manila to create a set of priority agendas, that would guide them in their endeavor to resist anti-democratic moves and regain strength in the country. The agenda was created and agreed upon by the Philippine members and will be utilized to enhance further consolidation efforts in the country. To strengthen ties between ADN and these organizations, ADN extended invitations to some of the members of the consolidation exercise to attend ADN's event in Bali so that they can participate in crucial discussions on endeavors to promote democratic advancement in the region.

Over the past two years of the democratic consolidation process the Philippines, civil society members have successfully convened and established a coalition called The Philippines Democracy Network (PDN) with over 50 NGOs involved. They have agreed on a democratic priority agenda and a national action plan to move forward. For the 2023 consolidation, the PDN will focus on expanding the coalition and engaging the diplomatic community.

Pakistan	<p>In partnership with Awaz Foundation and the Pakistan Development Alliance (PDA), efforts are underway in Pakistan to organize the first consultation aimed at revisiting and reinforcing the Charter of Democracy. This document initially formulated in 2006, serves as a commitment by major political parties to refrain from aligning with the military establishment against each other. As a foundation for reaffirming these commitments, the Charter of Democracy outlines 36 actionable commitments to consolidate democracy in Pakistan. Key stakeholders from Pakistan are encouraged to participate in these discussions to advance the national democratic agenda.</p>
Indonesia	<p>As part of the ongoing Indonesian consolidation process initiated in 2021, democracy advocates in Indonesia convened in Bali for the Indonesian Democracy - Sunset Talk, held on November 6, 2022. The event was held in conjunction with the Asia Democracy Assembly- #RiseTalk and was attended by 45 civil society members, human rights advocates, democracy advocates, environmental activists, think-tank, media personnel, elections experts, youth, and academics, as well as state-independent bodies such as the Election Commission and National Human Rights Commission. The primary objective of the gathering was to strengthen the connection among stakeholders and to familiarize them with the Asia Democracy Assembly 2022 process.</p> <p>Elections and Democracy Youth Camp</p> <p>As part of the Indonesia national consolidation effort, the Elections and Democracy Youth Camp was held on December 16-17, 2022, and was attended by 22 youth leaders from universities in Indonesia. The event collaborated with Themis Indonesian, the movement for integrity legal, political, and strategy, and the Student Executive Board of Jentera Law School. The program was innovative in bringing student movement leaders together to discuss democracy and make intergenerational connections. The unique part of this program was the multi-faceted consolidation, which included youth and trainers from diverse backgrounds. Top NGO leaders such as Bivitri Susanti, Feri Amsari (University movement leader from Jakarta and Sumatra), Rocky Gerung (Academic and Independent Opposition); Hadar Gumay, Titi Anggraini (Electoral Expert); Haris Azhar (human rights activist), and Novel Baswedan (renown anti-corruption activist) participated in strategizing democracy and human rights.</p>
Mongolia	<p>ADN has partnered with the Centre for Human Rights and Development (CHRD). CHRD will implement a consolidation exercise in Mongolia under the theme, "Overcoming challenges and building a roadmap to deepen democracy." The initiative aims to pursue objectives, such as increasing awareness and developing and strengthening pro-democracy sector solidarity and consolidation among democracy advocates at the regional and national levels. They will first conduct a baseline assessment of the civil society community and their perspective on the democratization of Mongolia and the state of democracy to craft plans to address democratic challenges and regression.</p>

The outcome of the national consolidation process was then fed into ADN's annual regional process called the **Asia Democracy Assembly**.

The **Asia Democracy Assembly 2022** was held in Bali, Indonesia from 7-9 November 2022, marking the first face to face meeting organized by ADN in the region since the pandemic. The aim of the assembly was to create an open space for reflection on the impact of recent events on democracy and human rights in the region and to advance cooperation among people's movements for democracy.

Approximately 200 people attended the Assembly, representing 24 countries and 120 organizations from diverse backgrounds and sectors of democracy. The two-day event consisted of *RISETalks* which included influential speakers and panel discussions, *RISE Huddles* for small group

discussions, artist exhibitions, and performances. The program was designed to focus on disinformation and its impact on societies as well as democracy's survival and sustainability.

On the final day of the Assembly, a special session was conducted with civil society members from the region to discuss a strategic plan for promoting democracy in Asia and exploring ways for regional democracy advocates to better collaborate and strengthen solidarity. The outcome document from these discussions can be found in **Annex 1**.

For a snapshot of some of the discussions that took place during the three-day assembly, have a look at ADN's **Asia Democracy Chronicles** Article "**The indefatigable struggle for democracy in Asia**" by Eduard Lazarus.





Pictures of the Assembly (<https://adnasia.org/programs/adn-democracy-assembly/>)

III. SUSTAINING THE DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT

Gwangju Youth Democracy Forum

A key mission and priority of the Asia Democracy Network is to sustain and advance the democracy movement. To continue the preservation of democracy, it is **vital to work with young democracy advocates and provide them with the necessary skill sets to continue the movement**. This year, we were able to implement the Gwangju Youth Democracy Forum, conduct Digital Security Trainings, and continue the operations of the Democracy Academy Platform.

Working with youth democracy leaders is a crucial step towards sustaining the democracy movement, fostering innovation and fresh perspectives, and promoting diversity and inclusion. Since 2017, ADN has partnered with regional partner organizations to implement an annual leadership program for young and emerging democracy advocates, aimed at sharing knowledge, building solidarity, and strategizing youth engagement in the region. This program has provided a platform for cross-border connections and cooperation, creating opportunities for a new generation of democracy leaders to share the future of the movement.

The pandemic prevented us from holding in-person programs for the past two years. This year, as the world began to reopen, we partnered with the May 18 Memorial Foundation based in Gwangju, Korea to host the **Gwangju Youth Democracy Forum (GYDF)**.

The May 18 Memorial Foundation, a longstanding partner of the ADN, is vital to the memorialization and truth-finding of the Gwangju People's Uprising of May 1980. In 1980, during a military dictatorship, brute force was used against the people of Gwangju

who were demanding democracy, resulting in one of the most horrific acts of state violence in Korean modern history. The May 18 Memorial Foundation's work is essential in the journey towards transitional justice and healing process for those affected by the trauma inflicted by the state.

Taking these rich resources of Gwangju and the May 18 Foundation, ADN worked together to develop a youth leadership program that focuses on resilience, peoples' movements, and democracy progress.

For three days from 18-20 May 2022, we invited activists from across the globe currently studying in South Korea to take part in the program.

Objectives:

- Strengthen solidarity among global democracy advocates.
- Establish cross border connections and cooperation.

South Korea has several university campuses that have higher education programs focusing on global citizenship, peace, non-governmental organization management, good governance, democracy, and human rights. With the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) supporting several higher education degree programs in these areas, there was a large and diverse pool of activists in the country. This allowed us to bring together youth activists not only from the Asian region, but from Africa, South America, Europe, Pacific, and the Middle East.

The participants had an opportunity to learn about the current challenges to democracy and human rights in their respective countries and engage in frank dialogue about various perceptions they hold. Naturally, the discussions progressed to how these gaps in differences can be overcome and solidarity can be strengthened.

In addition to indoor sessions consisting of presentations, sharing, and dialogue the participants also took part in the Annual Gwangju Democracy Forum organized by the May 18 Memorial Foundation. The forum provided an opportunity for the participants to connect with human rights and democracy activists from across the Asia region.

Another highlight of the program was when the participants took part in the Gwangju Uprising Eve Protests, a city-wide celebration on the eve of the 17th where the city's people gather on the streets to commemorate the Uprising through concerts, songs, and performances. Then on May 18th itself, the participants joined the National Ceremony of the May 18th Uprising organized by the Korean Government, which memorializes the sacrifices made by the people for democracy on May 18th, 1980.



Asia Regional People's Assembly 2022

As part of the **Global People's Assembly**, ADN organized the **Asia Regional People's Assembly 2022** on September 20 from 1.15 PM – 3 PM Bangkok time to galvanize the voice of the communities. This was a civil society initiative coordinated by Global Call to Action Against Poverty. Issues like poverty, hunger, vaccine inequality, climate change, human right violation etc., that affect various marginalized

communities were flagged by the members of the communities themselves. ADN invited selected Members of Parliament (MPs) and UN representatives to respond to the issues and concerns raised by the people. In addition, thematic discussion was held and a 'Demand Charter' was developed to be widely circulated seeking endorsement and for advocacy purposes.

ASIA REGIONAL PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY 2022

DATE & TIME
September 20, 2022 | 1:15 pm - 3 pm Bangkok time

REGISTRATION LINK
<https://bit.ly/3Boy55L>

COMMUNITY VOICES

RESPONSE FROM THE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

THEMATIC DISCUSSION

Logos: Global Call to Action Against Poverty, Asia Dalit Rights Forum, APSD, ADN, ADA, actionaid, THE PEOPLE'S VACCINE, OXFAM, Aide et Action.

[RISETALK: Situation Brief on Sri Lanka | People's Revolution of Sri Lanka - What is Next in Store for the Country? Webinar](#)

In response to the economic collapse and people's movement in Sri Lanka, ADN invited key civil society actors to shed light on the situation and what is next for the country.

[Click Here to Watch the Discussion](#)



RISETalk: Situation Brief on Sri Lanka

People's Revolution of Sri Lanka: What is next in store for the country?



Migara Doss

Attorney at Law Supreme Court Sri Lanka
Young Lawyer Association



Geethika Dharmasinghe

Youth Activist



Dr. Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu

Executive Director Center for Policy Alternative



Rev. Fr. Jeevantha Peiris

Religious Leader / Sri Lanka Movement Leader

JULY 20TH 2022

14:00 ICT
Bangkok Standard Time



ZOOM LINK:
<https://bit.ly/SLBriefer>

Asia Democracy Academy

In ensuring the continuity of providing training to enhance skills for NGOs actors ADN has implemented platforms for actors to expand their knowledge of democracy and digital security, respectively.

The Democracy Academy Platform was created by collaborating with multi-sectoral experts to develop a structured curriculum that expands knowledge on democracy that is easily accessible to everybody.

The interactive online platform was launched on November 26, 2020 and allows the learner to go through the curriculum at their own pace. In addition to the online platform the textbook is also available for download in PDF form.

ADN manual is available in English, Bahasa Indonesia, and Hindi languages and will be available on ADN's website in PDF form.

Digital Security

Digital Security Training Platform was developed in cooperation with the Southeast Asia Freedom Expression Network (SAFE-net) to increase knowledge and skills to members of civil society who work in high risk environments. The online platform

provided self-learning and downloadable manuals for users in addition to comprehensive training that was facilitated to respond to urgent cases happening in the region.

IV. WORKING TOGETHER FOR LOCAL DEMOCRACY

When we look for progress in democracy, we often look to our national or central governments to take action. However, bureaucracy and unstable national institutions create challenges for democracy and human rights despite the willingness for it

on the ground. We have seen a global trend of local governments such as cities and provinces, taking on a more active role in promoting democracy and human rights.

A. Blended Learning Courses Program (UCLG, RWI)

ADN, Raoul Wallenberg Institute Regional Asia Pacific, the United Cities and Local Governments ASPAC, City of Gwangju Korea Co-Organized Panel at the World Human Rights Cities Forum 2022 in Gwangju, Korea

On 12 October 2022, the Raoul Wallenberg Institute Regional Asia Pacific (RWI), the United Cities and Local Governments ASPAC (UCLG), and the ADN co-organized the “Integrating a Human Rights-Based Approach into Local SDGs Policies” at the World Human Rights Cities Forum. Since 2022, a training program on human rights and SDGs for local governments and other actors was developed

based on RWI’s handbook of cities that combines theoretical and practical implementation. The training consists of online modules, dialogues, and a workshop during World Human Rights Cities Forum in October 2022. The participants are from local governments, representatives of the National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), and civil society organizations (CSOs) in four (4) countries, namely, Indonesia, the Philippines, Nepal, and Bangladesh. The training was co-implemented by partner organizations. After completing the online modules and course projects, the participants presented their course projects at the forum.



V. RESPONDING TO REGIONAL DEMOCRACY CRISIS

A. Myanmar

Support Activists in Exile

Since the Myanmar coup in 2021, the violence and repression against the people of Myanmar supporting democracy increased, with over 5000 civilians killed by 2022. Therefore, many activists fled and sought safety in neighboring countries to continue the movement. In response to this, ADN continued to support pro-democrat activists to take shelter with proper legal documentation. Given Myanmar's prolonged coup, it is vital for organizations like ADN to sustain the movement through the support of those in exile, providing means to survive and expand their work to communicate with those still inside, responding to the crisis. Raising awareness of Myanmar's plight to the global community is crucial.

Stand Up for Democracy in Myanmar Photo Exhibition

SEA Junction and Human Rights Art Initiative (HuRAI), with the support of Taiwan Foundation

for Democracy (TFD) and Asia Democracy Network (ADN), organized the exhibition "Stand for Democracy in Myanmar" at the Bangkok Art and Culture Center (BACC) from 26 April to 8 May 2022.

The display leverages visual art to raise public awareness of, and to express solidarity with, the cause of the civil movement in Myanmar and their struggle for freedom, democracy, and human rights. The exhibition was launched with an event on 26 April 2022 at the same venue and was attended by over 80 people. The artist, along with other speakers as listed below, discussed the importance of mobilizing for democracy through a medium of art, including the overview information of what has been happening in Myanmar. The Co-culture Ensemble performed revolutionary music during the beginning and the end of the event. Following the discussion, Burmese food and drinks were served, and people continued the discussion and networking.

Organized by



SEA JUNCTION

HUMAN RIGHTS ART INITIATIVE

Supported by



TAIWAN FOUNDATION FOR DEMOCRACY
臺灣民主基金會



Opponents of military rule in Myanmar observed a "Silent strike" in early April 2021, with many people staying home to mourn the more than 700 people killed in protests against the military coup. Women had a central role in the movement. Photo: Associated Agency/Getty Images. Marcelo Brodsky 1/3 + 2/4 - 2021

STAND FOR DEMOCRACY IN MYANMAR

Marcelo Brodsky

**26 April -
8 May 2022**

Curved Wall, 3rd Floor
Bangkok Art & Culture Center (BACC)

LAUNCH EVENT
26 April, 5:30-7:00 pm

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B. Hong Kong

ADN and Partners Organize London Exhibition to Remember the 3rd Anniversary of the Hong Kong Movement

From June 11-12 in London, ADN and partner organizations jointly held an open visual exhibition to commemorate the third anniversary of the Hong Kong movement of 2019. The exhibition featured over 100 pieces and aimed to continue carrying

forward the spirit of the Hong Kong movement as the struggle continues with the promulgation of the Hong Kong National Security Law, which cracks down on activists and restricts civic space. We plan to raise awareness through exhibitions in other cities around the globe. Over two days, approximately 1,000 people visited the event and participated in the solidarity event.





從磚陣到世界
香港人的覺醒和改變

6.11 (SAT)
12 PM - 9 PM

6.12 (SUN)
10 AM - 9 PM

開幕典禮
Opening Ceremony
6.11 (SAT) 1 PM

6.12 三週年特別活動

LONDON
EXHIBITION
倫敦展覽
JUNE 12TH
THIRD ANNIVERSARY

APIARY STUDIOS
458 HACKNEY RD
LONDON UK E2 9EG

BRICKS
ON THE ROAD
FROM HONG KONG
TO THE WORLD

ORGANISED BY
主辦組織

ADN
ASIA DEMOCRACY NETWORK

LIBERTY

HKAID

獨立藝術家
Catherine
THE ARTIST

SUPPORTED BY
支持組織

HONG KONG
CULTURAL
SQUARE

HONG KONG
ASSISTANCE &
RESETTLEMENT
COMMUNITY

THE HONG
KONG
MOVEMENT

FIGHT FOR
FREEDOM
STAND WITH
HONG KONG

THE HONG
KONG
LINK UP

GLOBAL LIBERTY

HONG KONG
WATCH

正評
冰室

HONG KONG: Raising Awareness and Solidarity

The Asia Democracy Network is committed to raising awareness about the Hong Kong Democracy Movement. Over the past year, in partnership with Hong Kong activists, we have showcased a photo/art exhibit about the Hong Kong movement.

After the main London exhibit in early June 2022, we held a second mini exhibit at the World Movement for Democracy Global Assembly in Taipei, Taiwan, from 25-27 October 2022. Following that, in the next month, ADN organized another exhibit in Bali, Indonesia, on the occasion of the Asia Democracy Assembly 2022 from 7-8 November 2022.



VI. MEDIA INTERVENTION AND COOPERATION

ADN has been active in issuing statements on various human rights and democracy issues not just in Asia, but also in other parts of the world. Throughout the year, ADN has released statements on events in the Philippines, Myanmar, Timor-Leste, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Ukraine, among others. These statements are a testament to ADN's commitment to promoting and defending democracy, human rights, and the rule of law across the region. ADN continues to monitor developments and take action to support the people and movements fighting for these values.

Statement: International Day of Democracy 2022:
<https://adnasia.org/category/statements/>

“The Asia Democracy Network (ADN), on the occasion of the International Day of Democracy 2022, calls on all governments to ensure respect for freedom of press. Journalists should not be seen as a threat, rather as partners carrying a mandate to ensure transparent information and delivery of truth to the public. We reiterate that the media and press is the fourth estate and plays a vital role

in ensuring a functioning democracy. The press serves as the citizens' watchdog on every aspect of democratic governance and free flow of information.”

Statement: Walden Bello's Arrest, A Continuation of a Restrictive Space for Free Expression in the Philippines: <https://adnasia.org/statement-walden-bellos-arrest/>

“Freedom of expression is to be guaranteed and protected in a democracy. The arrest of Walden Bello is a sad indication of the Marcos-Duterte administration's willingness to compromise on democratic values for political conveniences. The civil society of Asia calls on the Philippine Government to drop the case against Walden Bello, and work on addressing the fundamental problems causing hindrance to the full realization of freedom of expression in the Philippines.”

Statement: Myanmar's Execution of Pro-democracy Activists: <https://adnasia.org/statement-myanmar-execution-of-pro-democracy-activists/>

Act of Terror and Brutality Tatmadaw Execute Four Pro-democracy Activists

**Seoul, South Korea
July 25, 2022**

The Asia Democracy Network and its members all over Asia condemns the execution by the Myanmar Junta of four Myanmar activists. The four activists -- former NLD lawmaker and hiphop artist Phyo Zeya Thaw, democracy campaigner Kyaw Min Yu also known as “Ko Jimmy “, activists Hla Myo Aung and Aung Thura Zaw -- were executed by the Myanmar Junta for their roles in the anti-coup protests, an act which the Junta deemed as “terror acts“. All four were sentenced to death by hanging in closed-door and largely unfair trials held sometime January to April this year, with their exact date of execution kept secret.

Such brutality is an escalation of the Tatmadaw’s reign of brutality in Myanmar, something which has already claimed the lives of more than 2,100 since the coup started, according to Assistance Association of Political Prisoners (AAPP). We ask the international community to be more resolute in their actions regarding the situation of democracy in Myanmar. This hesitance to act only provides the Military Junta to claim more lives and enact more suffering to the people of Myanmar whose freedoms continue to be held captive. We send our condolences to the family of the four victims, and we pledge our resolute effort and solidarity with pro-democracy forces in Myanmar who continue to work to attain freedom from the Tatmadaw’s brutality.



Statement: Timor-Leste's 2022 Polls: Upholding Commitment to Democracy, A Model for Asian Countries to Follow: <https://adnasia.org/statement-timor-lestes-2022-polls-upholding-commitment-to-democracy-a-model-for-asian-countries-to-follow/>

“With the success of these polls, ADN calls the other countries in Asia and beyond to follow Timor-Leste's good example of overcoming challenges posed by the pandemic and upholding the pro-democratic agenda as a government priority. This includes holding the election on time, putting necessary measures to protect the polls' sanctity, and allowing full participation of the citizens in a safe manner. We highlight this critical matter as there are attempts to postpone elections while citing the pandemic as an excuse. This trend poses the danger of increasing control and manipulation by the ruling parties over crucial political processes in some Asian countries. We further urge the authorities to fulfill their obligation to ensure democratic elections and encourage the people to protect the sanctity of the vote.”

Joint Statement: Respect Sri Lankan People's Demands, Stop the Violence: <https://adnasia.org/joint-statement-respect-sri-lankan-peoples-demands-stop-the-violence/>

“We are concerned to note the use of live ammunition to disperse unarmed citizens in Rambukkana on 19th April, which resulted in one death and several critically injured including police personnel. The excessive use of force on citizens who were demanding essential items is an inhumane act. The people of Sri Lanka have continued to experience such impunity that has not been investigated so far. The shooting at Rathupaswella is a case in point. We call on the people of Sri Lanka and the authorities to ensure peaceful and non-violent resolution to the current crisis. Violence will only exacerbate

the situation and compromise the resolution of the core problem.”

Joint Media Release: Thai Government Fails to Accept Recommendation to Repeal Restrictive Laws at UN Periodic Review: <https://adnasia.org/joint-media-release/>

“Thailand's human rights record was reviewed by the UN Human Rights Council on 10th November 2021. Ahead of the review CIVICUS and the Asia Democracy Network (ADN) submitted a **report** to the Council highlighting a range of concerns including the use of criminal defamation, lèse-majesté (royal defamation) and other restrictive laws against activists and journalists as well as harassment, physical attacks and allegations of enforced disappearances of activists. The report also documented the crackdown on peaceful protests, the arrests and criminalisation of protesters and use of excessive force by the police.”

March 1, 2022 - Statement: International Community, Raise Your Voice, Assist Ukraine: <https://adnasia.org/statement-international-community-raise-your-voice-assist-ukraine/>

“The Asia Democracy Network, an umbrella network of civil societies, together with its membership across Asia, stands with the people of Ukraine as they resist the forceful aggression of illiberal forces within their borders. As we confront our own threats to our communities and continue the defense of our own freedoms, we share your pain and we are one with you in clamoring for the international community to act fast against illiberal incursions to democracy, fundamental rights, freedom, peace, and justice. From Afghanistan, Myanmar, to Hong Kong, North Korea, Xinjiang and the South China Sea – we all cry with you and fight with you against this fog of illiberalism attempting to envelop us all.”

VII. NEW MEMBERS AND ORGANIZATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Welcoming SAFENet as a New Member

ADN is pleased to welcome the Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network (SAFENet) as one of our newest member organizations. SAFENet was established on 27 June 2013 in response to the growing criminalization of expression in the digital sphere across Southeast Asia. Originally focused on monitoring, advocacy, and solidarity for freedom of expression on the Internet, SAFENet expanded its work in 2018 to encompass the defense of digital rights. This includes advocating for the right to Internet access, the right to freely express oneself, and the right to safety in digital spaces.

SAFENet has consistently advocated for victims of digital rights violations and been active in advocating for Internet policies to include human rights perspectives. Since 2019, SAFENet has also provided holistic security training (physical, psycho-social, and digital) for vulnerable groups in Indonesia and Southeast Asia to build their resilience towards increasingly common digital repression.

Formally established in January 2019 as Perkumpulan Pembela Kekebebasan Asia Tenggara

(Southeast Asian Freedom Defenders Association), SAFENet is based in Denpasar, Bali. With over 40 members in more than 20 cities across Indonesia, SAFENet also maintains networks with civil society organisations in Southeast Asia and internationally.

SAFENet's members represent a diverse range of backgrounds, and include journalists, bloggers, housewives, LGBTQ people, private sector workers, digital security experts, and many others. Their vision is to defend digital rights, including the right to internet access, free expression, and safety in digital spaces, with the ultimate vision of realizing a digital space that upholds human rights values for all.

In pursuit of their mission, SAFENet implements four main programs: policy advocacy to support the fulfilment of digital rights, support for victims of digital rights violations, capacity building for civil society on digital rights, and solidarity for civil society who are fighting for human rights in digital spaces.

Recognition for Contribution by Government of Timor Leste

On 22 June, 2022, ADN Secretary General Ichal Supriadi and Chairperson Augusto Micalat, Jr. was recognized for their dedication to work for peace

and democracy in Timor-Leste by the President of the Republic of Democratic of Timor Leste H.E. Jose Ramos Horta.



5

FINANCIAL REPORT

Grant Funds	1,612,545
Operational Expenditures (Salaries, Benefits, Office Space, Office Supplies, Communications)	335,635
Program Expenditures	864,576
Balance of December 31, 2022	412,334

Note: Values in USD

ANNEX 1

Asia Democracy Assembly Special Strategy Session, November 9, 2023

SHAPING A BETTER REGIONAL COOPERATION FOR BETTER DEMOCRACY

STRATEGIC PLANNING/DISCUSSION SESSION Special Session at the Asia Democracy Assembly 2022 November 9th, 2022

SUMMARY

At the sidelines of the Asia Democracy Assembly 2022, civil society representatives and pro-democracy allies from all over the region discussed and reflected on the state of democracy in Asia and what has been done so far to combat anti-democratic expansion. Such conversation was the culmination of the Asia Democracy Network's year-long process of consultations and discussions conducted in various parts of the region. Cognizant of the worrying situation in Asia, there is a greater clamor for initiatives that structure and strengthen cooperation among the various pro-democracy stakeholders and other untapped segments of the society which can contribute to pro-democracy endeavors.

The discussions in RISETalk2022 and prior conversations point to a shrinkage in democratic space due to the expansion of influence by anti-democratic

powers such as China and Russia and the threat they bring to world peace and security. These influences also contribute to the continuous arrest of democratization and freedoms in spaces captured by illiberal forces such as Afghanistan, Myanmar, and Hong Kong. There is an agreement among stakeholders to strengthen capacity in preventing malign elements such as disinformation, corruption, degradation of political processes and institutions, polarization, and securitization from gaining a further foothold in the region. Through these conversations, we were able to capture some highlights and existing endeavors which we hope future pro-democracy efforts can build upon.

The discussions during the Strategic Session covered a plethora of actions and endeavors by the Asian civil society. This document aims to capture common trends, and highlight priorities, which can

be helpful as various stakeholders consolidate and coordinate in resolving the region's grave issues. The discussions made it clear that the region needs to focus on four priority areas. This priority has been

expressed by 40 representatives of regional and national civil society organizations during a brief strategic planning session at the Asia Democracy Assembly 2022, and a few priorities highlighted are:

PRIORITIES

1. Enhancing Protection of Democratic Processes and Institutions on the National and International Stage

Formal processes and the existence of democratic institutions are the keys to a democratic order, where public participation in governance, elections, and other socio-political processes are respected and protected. Protecting these democratic institutions ushers in a civic space whereby democratic values and human rights are upheld. However, in reality, people's political participation is becoming increasingly limited, while democratic institutions cannot function properly due to undue influences and interests.

Elections are a political event in which a state selects its leaders. It is a process that is supposed to bring about public discussion on the values, policies, and the economic direction of a state. Recently, elections have turned into a battle of resources, often featuring violence and social unrest due to increasing polarization and bad populism. In this case, wealthy candidates have absolute advantages, their agents of propaganda from the mainstream media control information flows, and corporations find their way to support candidates to protect corporation interests. Our elections have begun to produce bad leaders and corrupt governance through manipulated electoral machinery, information, and voters' behavior.

Democratic institutions such as functional and oversight bodies, including people's representatives, judiciaries, and media should maintain themselves and be supported as independent entities to ensure democratic processes run and are able to function as checks and balances. However, the situation in the region paints a picture of democratic institutions being compromised, favoring ruling parties, while legislatures serve elite interests rather than the people, by passing bad laws that harm rights and democratic principles.

Attention: Focus should be given to the work to increase support and enhance methodologies for election observation, especially pertaining to the protection of a fair election environment. With the current plague of disinformation and the distrust of institutions, it is very important that agents of truth-telling are protected, and the environment they operate in is preserved to be free. It is important that transparency in governmental affairs is promoted to ensure that the spread of such distrust is mitigated, thus efforts such as parliamentary and judicial watches, and anti-corruption programs, done in collaboration between government, media, and civil society should be encouraged. Furthermore, intergovernmental, and formal regional arrangements should work on providing more

opportunities for dialogue between them and civil society to ensure that accountability and opportunities for justice are provided in different stages.

What the CSOs say:

- a.** It is essential to popularize substantive democracy and democratic processes to prevent the proliferation of elective leaders with autocratic tendencies. There are several elections happening in the region in 2023, including in Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Thailand, which require the attention of everyone, given the concerning positions by some of the candidates. Pro-democracy advocates must observe these processes and conduct necessary advocacy to ensure that the rights of all are recognized and protected. The spread of identity-based populist rhetoric during elections needs to be prevented.
- b.** Cascade the promotion of democratic values by supporting efforts to enhance human rights in local governments and the bureaucracy. Ensure the wide distribution of pro-democracy narratives by producing yearly assessments and democratic reports. It should be highlighted that at present, there is a proliferation of autocracies in the region, and accountability measures must be enacted to ensure justice is served for those victimized by these regimes.
- c.** In Thailand, there needs to be collaboration to resist the tight grip of the military junta against pro-democracy actors. This includes providing legal assistance to those facing cases for exercising their rights to express and associate and combating the use of electronic monitoring bracelets and other repressive tools against pro-democracy actors. There should also be advocacy and initiatives to protect the General Elections set to happen within 2023. Positively, efforts are currently underway to
- conduct progressive labor courses and capacitate local leaders with important skills that will help advance the pro-democracy agenda in the country.
- d.** Actions must be taken to protect parliamentarians at risk so that they can continue to exercise their mandate. As allies, we need to call for the release of former Senator Leila de Lima, support the members of Myanmar's Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH), and halt the judicial harassment of Cambodian and Thai opposition parties. The situation of opposition MPs will be discussed in APHR's upcoming report, the Parliamentarians at Risk Report, which will be released in early 2023. We intend to support calls for reforms on fundamental freedoms such as association, expression, assembly in Southeast Asia, among the most concerning of which is the NPO (not-for-profit organizations) Law in Thailand. The region needs a holistic strategy to prevent these kinds of policies from passing. We also seek to empower CSOs by releasing resources on how they can better engage in the legislative process, which will be contained in an upcoming toolkit publication.
- e.** In Taiwan, groups have been encouraging the Legislative Yuan to pass laws that will enable ease of visa and registration process for pro-democracy individuals and organizations who want to be based in Taiwan, given the shrinking spaces observed in other parts of Asia.
- f.** Pakistan remains to be the largest beneficiary of Chinese grants in South Asia, and civil society organizations continue to express concerns regarding the transparency and accountability of these deals, notwithstanding the grave environmental impact of building and operating numerous coal power plants included in the grants. The fact that the

Pakistani government remains overly sensitive regarding matters involving China adds greater complications.

- g.** Indonesia's chairing of ASEAN in 2023 will play a critical role in holding those responsible accountable for the atrocities against the Rohingya people and the coup in Myanmar. Meanwhile, the Tatmadaw is preparing for an election in 2023, which is expected to result in further violence and intimidation against opposition members, media, and civil society actors remaining in the country. We urge collaborative efforts to monitor the situation and undertake advocacy where possible.
- h.** In Nepal, the government needs encouragement and assistance to ensure legal gaps which

prevent the full realization of fundamental freedoms are resolved. For instance, there are existing gaps that regress the state of media and civil society. Furthermore, transparency and accountability measures must be established to ensure that Official Development Assistance (ODA) support from World Bank, ADB, USAID, and other agencies is maximized.

- i.** In 2023, Cambodia will hold General Elections with no viable opposition and virtually absent independent media. In the next few years, Prime Minister Hun Sen is expected to transfer power to his son Hun Manet. There is an urgent need for Cambodian journalists to be supported to inform citizens on the ongoing political situations.

2. Multi-Faceted Consolidation and Solidarity

Recognizing the massive erosion of democracy, joint action is needed among all actors at all levels. The cross-sectoral consolidation process is fundamental in strengthening connections and formulating a collective advocacy agenda. The forum recognizes the urgency to structure the consolidation at the national, and regional levels, and make it workable in diverse conditions and societies. It is important to reinforce CSOs' solidarity and increase space for engaging the government. It is also essential to encourage the establishment of national processes including coalitions, and routine meetings.

The crisis of anti-democratic expansion in the region is manifested in various ways, such as continuing ruling party control in Cambodia, increasing religious intolerance in India, and the military Tatmadaw's assertion of control over Myanmar's government while terrorizing pro-democracy and ethnic factions. Additionally, illiberal forces are exerting their influence in other spaces like Hong

Kong and Taiwan, while the Taliban has ousted a democratically elected government in Afghanistan to bulldoze democratic foundations in favour of an ultranationalist and fundamentalist government which victimizes women and minorities.

There is a need to further strengthen and augment actions by Asia's civil society and partners in responding to these crises. Different spaces in the region face different issues, which contribute to the slow resolution of these anti-democratic crises that we face at present. We recognize that with a stronger and more consolidated Asian civil society, response and support, and outcomes can be maximized, thus opening possibilities for those victimized by these illiberal forces.

Attention: We call on parties to adopt democratic consolidation at all levels, to streamline and amplify the promotion and protection of democratic values, more so in spaces and sectors that experience greater threats. We endeavor for these democratic

consolidation exercises to consolidate approaches and serve as a nexus to find synergies and complementarities in action and advocacy among various sectors such as human rights, environment, sustainable development, anti-corruption and transparency, peacebuilding, and transitional justice among others. By adopting a consolidated approach to the promotion of democratic values, we hope to usher in a stronger force towards the achievement of democratic governance in the region that will be beneficial to the protection of such important endeavors, especially at the national level.

What the CSOs say:

- a.** Ensure advocacy, information, and dissection of national and global attacks on civic space are widely disseminated and easily accessible. With such information available, we hope to expand the discourse on how to effectively defend and protect civic spaces. Existing endeavors such as Civicus' publications and A4SD's Scorecard on SDGs among others must be supported given their immense role in democratic development discourses. Vulnerable groups must be specially targeted to ensure that they are further capacitated as they fight for their fundamental rights.
- b.** In the Philippines, national consolidation processes are ongoing among civil society organizations that recognize that a unified approach to promote democracy is needed. Organizations that are members and partners of ADN's network have been pushing for the formation of an informal "Philippine Democracy Network" to tackle advocacies more effectively in a civic space that has shrunk tremendously over the past 10 years. Similar consolidation exercises in Pakistan are also happening with the call to review the Democracy Charter as a common point of interest among stakeholders.

Similar attempts are also started in Indonesia, Timor-Leste, and Mongolia.

- c.** It is important to talk about the impacts of illiberal actors in the region, such as China. With Chinese-funded projects ongoing in many parts of the world, there is a need to build a grassroots movement against the harmful effects of Chinese investments, particularly as they expand their influence on renewable energy technology. Groups like Innovation for Change East Asia Hub and Business and Human Rights Resource Center have pioneered work in this area. Meanwhile, Doublethink Lab has been working on the China Index, to track the impact of Chinese interventions worldwide. Chinese and Hong Kong human rights lawyers are also looking at expanding their support in Asian countries where Chinese influence is escalating. One project they want to pursue is the training of Chinese, Japanese, and Hong Kong diaspora on how to confront this influence peddling and conduct advocacy.
- d.** Groups such as AMAN have been promoting community resilience through interfaith models. Through interfaith approaches, they have been encouraging and training women as agents of change through a project called "She Builds Change," implemented at the village level, which has been instrumental in preventing conflicts and preventing (re)radicalization. They are also strengthening the youth's capacity to conduct dialogues with different stakeholders and exposing them to actual opportunities where they can support them. We need to continue religious exchanges between conservative and progressive leaders to adopt methods introduced by the ULAMA to be close to the victims and experiences of women. We encourage Islamic countries to adopt religious moderation work in countries such as Pakistan and Malaysia.

- e. There is a call for donors to be more flexible as they support media, human rights, and democracy promotion projects. Groups have called for long-term and sustainable support from the donors. Groups are calling to rework grant guidelines, so constituents are better served.
- f. There is a recognition that civil society organizations in Asia need to reshape their approach in a post-Covid era. We will be commemorating the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Human Rights Declaration and the 13th Bangkok Declaration on Human Rights. We need to recall and re-emphasize the importance of the Vienna Document which recognizes the importance of democracy promotion as part of international relations. We need to remind everyone of the importance of these important milestones.
- g. South Asia needs to hold the People's SAARC since it has been 8 years since the last one was held. It is important to hold it given the dire situation in Afghanistan, and the economic issues facing Sri Lanka and Pakistan, which directly affect their way of life and development. We need to have a venue to talk about these important matters.

3. Free Media, Artivism, and Free Expression

Attacks on media outlets and persons, including social media users and critical voices, are rampant indicating the vulnerability of media practitioners and users. A report from AAG indicates that cyber-attacks globally increased by 125% through 2021 and increasing volumes of cyber-attacks continued to threaten businesses and individuals in 2022. However, media remains a necessary space to deliver information and increase public awareness, which users and critics can address creatively. It is also important to enhance media coalition at the national and regional level, as well as to continuously educate people about safe media use. Among the actors exposing facts and proposing immediate steps to enhance media are those who use creative art platforms to promote democracy and human rights, enhancing their available platforms and collaboration.

While attacks on free expression remain to be prevalent in the region, forms of creative resistance have been instrumental in emphasizing the importance of democracy and empowering stakeholders to continue the fight. We are entering an era where memes, music, movies, poems, and stories have

become vehicles for greater citizen awareness of various socio-political issues. In Asia, street performances, exhibitions, flash mobs, comedy, and satire are increasingly being used as mediums for social critique and expression of dissent. There is a need to further enhance support for pro-democracy artists who aim to highlight critical issues, thus aiding the advocacy of civil society in the region.

Attention: Priority must be given to expanding the space for media freedom. In a lot of Asian states, there is a need to review legislation governing media operations. Furthermore, there needs to be further support given to independent media associations and legal assistance must be provided to journalists who face harassment while they perform their roles. We are facing a plague of disinformation, and governments must do everything in their power to mitigate the damages it brings about in public discourse, during public and political processes, and in times of vulnerability. Furthermore, governments and social media companies must be held accountable as they conduct practices akin to unjust civilian surveillance and unfair data harvesting practices. We should also support artists

as they use art to educate the public on democratic values, as a form of creative expression of dissent.

What the CSOs say:

- a. There are no regional media coalitions in East, Southeast Asia, and South Asia, it is therefore important to create platforms where journalists can be more consolidated. We believe that web media will play a more important role in shaping public discourse in the future. In Sri Lanka, journalists have been clamoring to build collectives and connect with Southeast and South Asian media formations, and to do this they need facilitation. In Thailand, the media also want to connect more with artist-activists, especially since this they have been crucial in creatively expressing issues and have become most visible in social movements. All forms of media alliance-building should be supported.
- b. There is a need to enhance pro-democracy narrative collection and sharing. In terms of concrete steps, ADN has been doing this through its Asia Democracy Chronicles. We connect brave storytellers through dialogue to learn straight from them how we can support each other in doing our job better and doing our causes better. We fill ADC with underreported stories which we want people to know. This is a part of our advocacy to promote collaborative journalism or content production among CSOs and media, without compromising independence.
- c. To intensify digital activism initiatives, it is crucial to foster collaborations. Manila-based organization Dakila, for instance, runs human rights film festivals and has valuable materials that can be shared. They also conduct programs related to freedom of expression both online and offline. Similarly, SEAJunction organizes events and exhibitions, including a collaborative with ADN on the plight of the Myanmar people as they struggle under the coup. I4C on the other hand implements a program called “Libraries of Resistance” in which they feature stories on enabling democratic change through small actions. Another notable initiative is the SEA Queer Culture Festival organized by ASEAN SOGIE Caucus, supporting 40 artists (in film and literature) to showcase their work.
- d. There is a need to address invasive tech and digital issues by lobbying intergovernmental and national institutions to develop a regional policy that tackles digital freedom issues and enables direct communication with tech platforms. Constant coordination is essential to ensure that the crafting of these policies is responsive to the concerns of the various stakeholders.

4. Youth and Intergenerational Understanding

According to the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Asia Pacific region is home to two billion people aged under 30, accounting for 54% of the world’s youth population. These young actors continue to play a significant role and hold immense potential in advancing democratic values in the region. The youth have been at the forefront of advocating

for critical issues such as gender equality, climate change, and economic mobility and equity. Their impactful presence is evident as they take the lead in various social movements, especially in Hong Kong, Thailand, and Myanmar. In the digital space, they exert their influence through their adept use of social media and various digital platforms.

With their visible presence, however, they have also become targets of anti-democratic forces. In Hong Kong, for instance, numerous youth activists and opposition members have been singled out by the Hong Kong and Chinese governments for their involvement in the 2019-2020 Hong Kong Protests. In Thailand, youth pushing for institutional reforms have been subjected to Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation (SLAPP) cases due to their support of the pro-democracy movement.

The youth are carving out their space as they learn to fight for their freedoms. As members of civil society, we need to empower them by facilitating internal reforms and capacity-building initiatives for the new generation of Asian activists. Furthermore, it is important to establish connections and bridges among generations, sectors, and organizations to enable the youth to fully harness their potential and energy in coordinating movements, and advocacies and expanding their role in the region's democratic movement.

Attention: Create opportunities within the democratic movement where youth can actively shape the trajectory of democratization in their own countries, while also expanding opportunities for growth through capacity building and training opportunities for youth activists. It is essential to strengthen intergenerational exchanges and provide additional learning opportunities to sustain youth activism. The democratic movement should leverage the power of youth in dominating public discourse, particularly in the realm of social media. Additionally, it is crucial to create broader platforms that not only destigmatize activism at home but also prioritize the well-being and mental health of youth activists.

What the CSOs say:

- a.** Well-being of youth and women activists must be ensured. Programs that promote inclusion, intergenerational dialogue, and intersectional approaches to enhance the participation of the disabled, LGBTs, and indigenous peoples must be prioritized.
- b.** Hosting interns can be a good practice to expose them to the day-to-day challenges faced by civil society and activists. Some organizations have been incorporating learning opportunities such as online lectures, camps, training, etc.
- c.** There needs to be a youth fellowship program for actors against violence, extremism, and awareness on issues like HK protests and the coup in Myanmar. There are organizations like the ASEAN Youth Forum who are conducting online youth festivals to discuss issues and express solidarity; as well as the School of Human Rights advocacy to teach them the advocacy landscape in the region. They are planning to host the ASEAN Youth Summit and work with Indonesia to strengthen our agenda next year as the country chairs ASEAN.
- d.** Many organizations are interested in fostering intergenerational dialogues within the civil society community in each country and across sectors. For instance, organizations like Plan International are collaborating with AICHR and their country offices to provide education on children's rights and empower children who have become human rights defenders, addressing risks and safeguarding concerns. They are also actively exploring the implementation of workshops on children's rights and gender equality. In addition, they are set to release the Girls' Leadership Index and

the World Report on Girls' political participation, which shed light on the representation and perception of women in politics. CIVICUS and Forum Asia are conducting an analysis to evaluate the level of freedom of expression in youth-centric spaces. These efforts reflect the growing importance of Intersectionality, gender rights, and children's rights in the region.

- e. Groups such as I4C have been implementing the "Support the supporters" program, which focuses on the families and immediate

environment of activists, aiming to enhance their mental well-being. This initiative aims to facilitate sustainable activism by promoting institutional changes within CSOs to prioritize and support mental health. Moreover, it seeks to destigmatize activism within homes.

- f. It has been one year since young women in Afghanistan were deprived of access to basic education after the Taliban took over. We need to exert pressure and advocate for their fundamental rights to be restored.

CONCLUSION

The dire situation in the region emphasizes the need for improved collaborations, particularly as autocratic forces are actively communicating and learning from each other. The Asian civil society must actively promote and support open and frank conversations, as well as trust-building exercises, to foster synergy in their approaches.

Based on the conversations held during the Asia Democracy Assembly 2022 and the closed-door Strategic Planning, civil society and their allies from other sectors must further consolidate and synergize actions to effectively respond to challenges such as extreme polarization, exclusion of youth, women and other vulnerable sectors, the proliferation of disinformation and intrusive technologies, unsustainable development, injustices, and attacks on fundamental freedoms and rights. We hope that by releasing this document, stakeholders are made aware of existing and planned actions which confront the regression of democracy in the region, and hopefully trigger conversations and collaborations among them.

Conversations must take place on how to effectively confront the ways illiberal actors undermine democratic processes and institutions. From the pervasive actions of China to the plight of Afghans under the Taliban and the people of Myanmar under the Tatmadaw, as well as the undermining of democratic elections and judicial processes, the corrosive effects of corruption on development, inequality, and the polarization of citizens due to mis- and disinformation, we must adapt our approaches of based on evidence-based practices. This requires harnessing the advancements of technology, and leveraging the passion and creativity of the pro-democracy sector. There must be a realization that the root of these challenges can only be resolved through inter-sectoral approaches at different levels – from national to regional and beyond.

We must be recognize and harness the power that the youth hold in shaping the trajectory of our efforts to democratization. Civil society and other pro-democracy sectors have a responsibility

to provide opportunities for the youth to channel their synergies and contribute to positive societal change. This can be achieved by actively involving them in dialogues with older generations and fostering cross-sectoral collaboration that includes their perspectives, and ensuring they are represented in decision-making processes. Supporting the youth within their environments, is equally important. This entails providing access to comprehensive support systems that address their physical, mental, and social well-being needs.

Finally, we must unite in our advocacy as we confront the growing threat to democracy in Asia. This is an issue that transcends borders and requires collective effort to address. We must strengthen advocacies that capture the middle ground, educate with compassion, and creatively convey democratic values that are easy to appreciate. We have the tools and power in our hands, we call on everyone to join and support each other to bring about genuine democratization for generations beyond us.



