**Civil Society Space Report – Input**

**Asia Democracy Network (ADN)**

**I. Overview**

The Asia Democracy Network (ADN) is an open platform for dialogue, information sharing, and cooperation among multi-stakeholders engaged in defending and promoting democracy and human rights in Asia. ADN is an international umbrella network consisting of civil society organizations (CSOs) and networks of democracy advocates in Asia. Through collaboration among CSOs engaged in democracy, human rights and development at the global, regional, national and local levels, ADN aims to create synergy for joint advocacy of CSOs in the Asian region.

As indicated in the UN Human Rights Council resolution 27/31, in order for civil society to prosper, it is vital that the fundamental rights of the freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly, as well as the right to participate in public life, are fully protected. Across the globe, civil society is experiencing restrictions and limitations, as well as a shrinking civic space. Asia is no exception to this trend. Throughout Asia, governments are increasingly placing restrictions on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) through implementing regulations that limit funding and impose tedious registration processes for organizations, thereby hindering people’s ability to exercise their freedoms.

Facing the challenge of a shrinking space for civil society, ADN has worked to provide and maintain a platform for advocates of human rights and democracy for collaboration and dialogue. For example during the Thailand military takeover in 2014, ADN, in collaboration with its partner organizations, held an international solidarity conference bringing civil society activists internationally and within Thailand, to have a dialogue on a way forward from the threat to democracy and human rights.

This is one of many examples of the type of approach that ADN takes to increase civil society space for CSOs. With national civil society platforms under threat, ADN works to create a regional space for CSOs to share their challenges and concerns, while raising awareness of the situations of their respective countries, and exchanging and sharing best practices.

With many Asian governments having misconceptions of democracy being a Western ideal and the promotion of it being a threat to sovereignty, it has significantly affected the work of CSOs. As an Asian regional network, ADN has the unique opportunity to advocate the ideals of democracy and maintaining civil society space from within the Asian region.

As an advocacy organization, the Asia Democracy Network is not without various challenges. However, through promoting regional solidarity and cooperation, we are confident that the shrinking civil society space will be defeated.

**II. Experiences of ADN activities**

i) Advocacy and solidarity

Since its inception in 2013, ADN has organized two country specific International Solidarity Conference, each on Thailand and Sri Lanka. In response to the military coup in May 2014 in Thailand, ADH invited democracy and human rights advocacy groups, academics, and key figures from Malaysia, Indonesia, Nepal, South Korea, and Thailand in order to have an open discussion on the situation and assess an action plan for an improvement of the situation. The second country specific meeting for accountability and justice in Sri Lanka was organized to generate solidarity among civil society in Asia to support the democracy and human rights movement in Sri Lanka.

ADN has been involved in international and regional advocacy through a variety of platforms. In February 2014, ADN co-hosted the Asia regional consultation on the rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association with UN Special Rapporteur Maina Kiai to inform his thematic report to the UN Human Rights Council (A/HRC/26/29, 2014). The Consultation focused on groups most at risk highlighting the realities and challenges the civil society in countries like Sri Lanka and Cambodia encounter.

ADN, in partnership with FORUM-ASIA, organized the capacity building training for the activists across Asia, GALAA (Glocal Advocacy Leadership in Asia Academy), on an annual basis.

1 ADN key activities

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **2014 February** | **2014**  **April** | **2014**  **July** | **2014**  **August** | **2014**  **September** |
| - 1st Steering Committee Meeting (Singapore, Singapore)  - Regional consultation on FoAA with UN Special Rapporteur Maina Kiai (Singapore, Singapore) | - Regional Strategic Planning (RSP) Meeting (Bangkok, Thailand) | - International Solidarity Conference, ‘Thailand: Human Rights and Democracy in Crisis’ (Quezon City, Philippines) | - Glocal Advocacy Leadership in Asia Academy (GALAA) II (Bangkok, Thailand) | - UN General Assembly Side Event Open Forum on Justice and Governance, ‘Ensuring Justice and Governance in the Post-2015 Development Goals’ (New York, USA) |
| **2014**  **October** | **2014**  **November** | **2015**  **January** | **2015**  **February** | **2015**  **March** |
| - Transparent Ulaanbaatar 2014 Anti-Corruption Forum (Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia)  - International Solidarity Mission to Cambodia (Phnom Penh, Cambodia) | - Regional Human Rights Mechanisms, Inter-regional Dialogue on ASEAN and SAARC (Kathmandu, Nepal)  - International Forum, ‘Empowering the Community of Democracies’ (Seoul, Korea)  - Ulaanbaatar Civic Forum ‘Promoting Civic Participation in Accountable Governance and Sustainable Development in Northeast Asia’ (Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia) | - Strategy Development of Mongolian Civil Society Organizations (Seoul, Korea)  - Promoting Accountability and Democratic Governance in Asia Workshop (Bangkok, Thailand) | - Solidarity Conference on Justice and Accountability in Sri Lanka (Bangkok, Thailand) | - Strengthening Democracy in Asia: Inclusion, Participation, and Rights  (New Delhi, India) |

ii) Statements and urgent appeals

ADN issues a statement to express a grave concern over the situation considered as a threat to the democracy, rule of law, and the protection of human rights. The followings are issued in 2014 until as of now in 2015:

1. 23 May, 2014: Condemnation of Coup d’état by Thai Military
2. 29 September, 2014: Condemnation of the Violent Crackdown on Pro-Democracy Protestors in Hong Kong
3. 9 October, 2014: Concern of Indonesia’s Scrapping of Direct Local Elections and Freedom of Assembly
4. 10 October, 2014: Cambodia at a Crossroads New Laws Would Limit Freedoms
5. 24 November, 2014: People’s SAARC 2014 Declaration
6. 11 December, 2014: ASEAN-Korea’s Concern over Thai Military Ruler Participation
7. 11 January, 2015: Call for a Peaceful Transition of Power in Sri Lanka
8. 13 March, 2015: Condemnation of Burmese government’s crackdown on students protesting in Letpadan and Rangoon
9. 11 May, 2015: Joint Statement on Cambodia’s Law on Associations, and Non-Governmental Organizations (LANGO)
10. 22 May, 2015: Urgent Call for Action Statement on Rohingya

**III. Challenges**

Civil society in Asia has grown in number for the last decade but remain fragmented due to the mentality and an inability to cooperate beyond thematic areas, sectors and territorial boundary. ADN have witnessed continuously shrinking democratic space at local and national level and weakening or failing democratic institutions and practices in many countries in Asia. Under this difficult circumstance, civil society is challenged to develop innovative and long-term strategy to defend and promote democracy in Asia. Given the fact that Asia is the only region where there is no functioning regional human rights standard and mechanism (asides from ASEAN) advocates need to initiate a long term campaign for regional human rights monitoring mechanism.

**IV. Useful resources**

i) ADN website: <http://adn21.asia/>

ADN Facebook : Asia Democracy Network - ADN

ADN Twitter : @adn2013seoul

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|  | **Sector/Theme** | **Members\*** (Table 2) | **Website** |
| **Regional**  **(Thematic or Sectoral)** | Human Rights | FORUM-ASIA | http://www.forum-asia.org/ |
| Election | ANFREL | http://anfrel.org/ |
| Transparency | TI (Cambodia and Mongolia) | http://www.transparency.org/ |
| Development | ADA | Not available |
| Research | ADRN (EAI and PRIA) | <http://www.eai.or.kr/english/index.asp>  http://www.pria.org/ |
| Press Freedom | SEAPA | http://www.seapa.org/ |
| Peace and Security | GPPAC | http://www.gppac.net/ |
| **Sub-regional** | South Asia | People's SAARC | http://www.peoplesaarc.org/ |
| Southeast Asia | SEACA | http://www.seaca.net/ |
| Northeast Asia | EADF | Not available |
| **Hosting Country** | South Korea | KDN | Not available |

Table 1 List of Member Organization links

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| **Acronym** | **Full name** |
| **ADA** | Asia Development Alliance |
| **ADN** | Asia Democracy Network |
| **ADRN** | Asia Democracy Research Network |
| **ANFREL** | Asian Network for Free Elections |
| **EADF** | East Asia Demoracy Forum |
| **EAI** | East Asia Institute |
| **FA** | FORUM-ASIA |
| **FORUM-ASIA** | Asia Forum for Human Rights and Development |
| **GPPAC** | Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict |
| **KDN** | Korea Democracy Foundation |
| **People’s SAARC** | People’s South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation |
| **PRIA** | Participatory Research in Asia |
| **SEAPA** | Southeast Asia Press Alliance |
| **SEACA** | Southeast Asian Committee for Advocacy |
| **TI** | Transparency International |

Table 1 List of Acronym