

## **ASIAN FEDERATION AGAINST INVOLUNTARY DISAPPEARANCES (AFAD)**

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**Enforced Disappearance is Anti-Life...**

**No to Untold Sufferings....**

**Sign and Ratify the UN Convention**

**for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance!**

The Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances joins all families of the disappeared persons around the world in the commemoration of the International Week of the Disappeared from May 26 to June 1. This week of the *desaparecidos* was first commemorated by the Latin American Federation of Associations of Relatives of Disappeared–Detainees (FEDEFAM) more than a couple of decades ago.

In the observance of this occasion, AFAD affirms the right of every person to life, liberty and dignity and therefore, the right not to be subjected to enforced disappearance. The essential value of one's existence is to live freely without discrimination, prejudices and harm. Enforced disappearance does not only violate these basic human rights by physically removing a person from the protection of the law but it also denies the families of the disappeared persons the right to know the truth and to seek justice.

Enforced disappearance is a global phenomenon. It has been occurring everywhere – down the street, in the barrios, in the upland, on the highway, in the woods, in the desert, at the border, and even in the household. In many points of the globe, there are people who are made to disappear for exercising their rights and for opposing against human rights violations. It is done mostly in the context of widespread and systematic way under a climate of impunity where the perpetrators are free to do what they want without accountability. Asia is now considered the graveyard of the *desaparecidos* for having submitted the most number of cases to the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances in recent years.

The disappearance of every person brings terrible sorrows and sufferings to his or her family. The long and agonizing search for the victims' whereabouts usually ends in fruitless undertaking. The normal life that their families used to have is now shattered by emotional and psychological devastation, economic dislocation, uncertainty... Their lives are even at risk for having to

undergo the same fate that their loved ones succumbed for seeking truth, justice, redress and reparation.

But the families of the disappeared refuse to give in to fear. They know that their disappeared loved ones' only hope to return alive and to find truth and justice is for them to be strong and united. Their faith is as clear as the light at the end of the tunnel and as bright as the rainbow after every rain.

The adoption of International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced or Disappearance by the United Nations General Assembly on the 20th of December 2006 sparked a ray of hope for the families of the disappeared. To date, however, only four countries in Asia have affixed their signatures to the Convention. Asia, being the continent which submitted a huge number of cases to the United Nations needs the ratification by its governments of this new treaty and to pass domestic laws criminalizing enforced disappearance.

The International Week of the Disappeared is an expression of solidarity of all families of *desaparecidos* of the world. It is a celebration of life to honor the historical memory of those who have given their lives for the ransom of many. It is a renewal of commitment of the families of the disappeared and all human rights advocates to keep on the struggle against enforced disappearances and impunity until the dawning of the day when there are no more *desaparecidos*.

On this occasion, families of the disappeared call for an end to their untold sufferings brought about by this anti-life instrument used to silence their beloved *desaparecidos*. Despite their physical absence, the *desaparecidos* refuse to be silenced. For indeed, the perpetrators have miserably failed to silence them by physically eliminating their victims. As we commemorate the International Week of the Disappeared, we reiterate that the *desaparecidos* remain ever present in our minds and hearts.

Enforced disappearance is anti-life... No to untold sufferings... Ratify the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance!

Signed:

MUGIYANTO  
Chairperson

MARY AILEEN D. BACALSO  
Secretary-General