



Report to the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances (UN CED) for the period of June 2015 – June 2016

Prepared by:
the Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD)

I. Background:

The Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances is a federation of 14 member organizations working directly on the issue of enforced disappearances in ten different South Asian and South-East Asian countries, namely, Bangladesh, disputed state of Jammu and Kashmir, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, South Korea, Thailand, and Timor-Leste. It also has an individual member in Laos and 2 in Geneva.

AFAD and its member organizations hold various activities in the reporting period, which aimed at lobbying and raising awareness towards the issue of enforced disappearances and the importance of signing and ratifying the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED). These activities and events took place through the whole year, however, in 2015 particular attention was given to the commemoration of the International Day of the Disappeared (IDD) on 30th August, and to the Human Rights Day, on December 10. The International Week of the Disappeared – on the last week of May 2016 – also constituted an important occasion to promote the Convention and its ratification.

At the national level, AFAD conducted regular visits to selected embassies based in Manila, Philippines, as well as lobbying visits to different countries, which were used as an occasion to meet with government representatives and other relevant stakeholders, so as to raise issues related to enforced disappearances and promote the signing and ratification of the Convention.

At the regional level, AFAD engaged with other human rights organizations such as International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), Human Rights Watch (HRW), Forum- Asia, Focus on the Global South and Amnesty International (AI), in order to identify common strategies and to plan coordinated activities aimed at highlighting the importance of the ratification of the Convention in Asia.

At the international level, AFAD submitted three General Allegations to the UN WGEID on Laos, Pakistan and Bangladesh, and followed up on the said submissions, including the status of the cases previously submitted by its member organizations.

AFAD member organizations also engaged with State representatives at the national level, to lobby for the ratification of the Convention. Moreover, they cooperated with other human rights organizations located in the country to jointly organize events. They also wrote joint submissions for the UPR, thus calling on the international community to recommend their country to adopt a series of measures, between which is the ratification of the Convention on Enforced Disappearances. In addition, member organizations regularly document and submit cases of ED to the UN WGEID.

II. Example of activities carried out, which are related to the Convention on ED

Conferences, Seminars and Public Events

Different public events have been organized by AFAD member organizations, on various occasions, such as:

- a) The International Day of the Disappeared 2015
 - A seminar entitled “*International Seminar on Enforced Disappearance: Lessons for Korea*”, was organized in South Korea with speakers from Indonesia, Timor Leste, Guatemala, Laos and the AFAD Secretary-General, Mary Aileen D. Bacalso with lobby visits to the Ministry of Reunification and the National Commission on Human Rights.
 - In Pakistan a conference entitled “*Rising Trends of Enforced Disappearance in Asia*” was held.
 - Public discussions with families of disappeared, human rights lawyers and other partner organizations took place in Kashmir, Timor Leste, Sri Lanka and Nepal, where the program concerned “*Victim-centric Inquiry into Disappearances: Key Concerns, Challenges and Way Forward*”
- b) Rallies and candle-lightings have been organized during the Human Rights Week 2015 and on other national occasions by various countries, such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Timor Leste – where

also a national conference on past crimes, including ED, took place. Moreover, in Sri Lanka a public event was organized, which was attended by the Prime Minister.

These activities are the occasion for AFAD member organizations to publicly urge governments to ratify the Convention and enact domestic laws criminalizing enforced disappearances.

- c) For the International Week of the Disappeared 2016, rallies, press conferences and public demonstrations have been organized in various countries. AFAD Secretary General, together with the Chairperson of its member organization in the Philippines, FIND, were interviewed by Radio Veritas Asia. On this occasion, they stressed the importance of the Convention on ED – despite the existence of a national law – and called on President Aquino to sign it before the end of his term.

Releasing of Public Statements

AFAD issued various statements during the reference period, particularly for the International Day of the Disappeared, the 67 Anniversary of the UDHR, for the 5th Anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on Enforced Disappearances and for the International Week of the Disappeared in May 2016. Moreover, its member organizations have been issuing and sharing public statements on those occasions, as well as for other national and international recurrences, calling on their governments to sign and ratify the Convention.

Social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and AFAD website are also daily used to raise issues related to enforced disappearances and the Convention.

AFAD also produced the following publications:

1. From Grief to Courage – both English and Bahasa versions
2. The Voice – February 2016 issue

AFAD Activities in the Philippines

In the reporting period, AFAD conducted visits to the Embassies of the following countries: The Netherlands, Switzerland, USA, France, Belgium, Norway, Germany, Sweden (in Bangkok). A delegation from AFAD also met with representatives from the EU Delegation in Manila. These meetings aimed at exploring possibilities of cooperation within AFAD efforts towards the signing and ratification of the Convention in the Philippines and in other countries. Religious congregations have also been visited, due to their importance in the society.

Moreover, film showings in the universities have been conducted, to familiarize students with the issue and the Convention on ED. On the occasion of the Human Rights Week, AFAD organized an On-The-Spot Poster-Making Contest, while for the IDD 2015 and IWD 2016, solidarity activities have been organized, asking for the signing and ratification of the Convention in Laos and Bangladesh respectively.

Last ditch efforts to lobby for the signature of outgoing president Benigno Aquino III are being done. A joint letter of AFAD and FIND; a joint statement of the Coalition Against Enforced Disappearances were personally brought to the Office of the President and complemented with lobby efforts with some senators close to the president, e.g. Senator Risa Hontiveros-Baraquel and Senator Leila de Lima. These letters have been joined by Representative Edcel Lagman, main author the Philippine Anti-Disappearance Act of 2012. Efforts to request states parties to the Convention to do last minute lobbying are also being done through official letters to their concerned embassies in Manila.

AFAD Activities at regional and international level

In August 2015, AFAD representatives conducted a lobbying visit in Indonesia, during which they met with families of the victims, as well as with the Presidential Advisor, the National Human Rights Commission and the Minister of Law and Human Rights. Moreover, in June 2016, AFAD campaign officer conducted a lobbying visit in Timor Leste, meeting with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ombudsman office, and the UN Human Rights Office.

In September 2015 a delegation from AFAD, Indonesia and Nepal went to Geneva to lobby for the ratification of the Convention with the Human Rights Council.

In November 2015, lobby visits were conducted by AFAD delegates to relevant government ministries, e.g. the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of National Dialogue. Moreover, a meeting with the Speaker of the House was held with the AFAD delegation lobbying for the immediate ratification of the Convention on Enforced Disappearances.

A meeting with regional human rights organizations has been organized in Bangkok in May 2016, in order to find collective strategies and plan coordinated activities in the short and long-term period, related to raising awareness and collectively lobbying for the Convention.

There have been other activities AFAD conducted to support the Convention on Enforced Disappearances, but due to time constraints, only the major ones are included in this report.

Signed by,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Khurram Parvez', written in a cursive style.

KHURRAM PARVEZ

Chairperson