



TAIWAN FOUNDATION  
for DEMOCRACY

財團法人臺灣民主基金會

November 10, 2016

### **Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances Receives the 2016 Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award**

The Taiwan Foundation for Democracy (TFD) announced today that the 2016 Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award will be awarded to the Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD). AFAD is a regional federation of human rights organizations working directly on the issue of forced disappearances, with its headquarters in Manila, Philippines. Founded on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1998, AFAD has grown to be a federation of 14 member organizations from countries such as Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, South Korea, Thailand, Timor-Leste.

AFAD's establishment was inspired by the increasing problem of involuntary disappearance in the Asian region that necessitated a regional response from organizations working on resolving this issue. AFAD was also influenced by the Latin American Federation of Associations for Relatives of Disappeared-Detainees (FEDEFAM), founded in 1981 at the height of massive involuntary disappearances under authoritarian regimes in various Latin American countries. The formation of AFAD was a breakthrough in the Asian region, which was characterized by diversity in language, culture, religion and political situation.

The close cooperation between AFAD and FEDEFAM during AFAD's initial years was concretized through their joint efforts in lobbying for the establishment of an international treaty against enforced disappearances with an independent monitoring mechanism to ensure implementation at the UN. These efforts led to the adoption of the "International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances" in 2006, and the creation of a strong

monitoring body, the “UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances” (UNCED) in 2010, after the implementation of the Convention.

From 2002 to 2005, AFAD actively and consistently participated in the drafting and negotiation process of the Convention. AFAD helped debunk the myth that enforced disappearance is solely a Latin American phenomenon. AFAD also proactively lobbied various Asian governments to sign and ratify the Convention, which provides for the right to truth and the right not to be subjected to enforced disappearance. The text of the Convention is based not only on the legal perspectives of the representatives of the UN member states, but most importantly, on the real-life experiences of families of the disappeared in Asia and the world.

AFAD also facilitated a strategic and technical exchange between Timorese civil society organizations and the Liga Guatemalteca de Higiene Mental in May 2015, when Timorese and Indonesian organizations successfully reunited fourteen abducted children in Timor-Leste during the Indonesian occupation with their families.

Article 2 of the “Guidelines of the Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award” states the endeavor to “support democratic development and promote human rights in the Asia region” as the foundational mission for establishing the Award. As Mr. Nicholas Bequelin, East Asia Director of Amnesty International, who served as one of the final stage reviewers for this year’s Award, points out, “It follows that the capacity of an award recipient to contribute to this goal, due to past, current or future contributions should be taken into consideration. In this light, AFAD has a proven track record of making major contributions to the protection and advancement of human rights in the region and by virtue of being a federation with a thick network of cooperation and solidarity, it has a real capacity to continue to deliver change across the region.”

AFAD was chosen after a two-stage reviewing process. This year, the TFD convened a preliminary review panel meeting facilitated by President Szu-chien Hsu to discuss and shortlist the finalists. The five finalists whose names and credentials were sent to the final review panel included individuals and organizations from China, Philippines, Thailand, and the US. Those finalists’ respective fields included human rights in

China, enforced disappearances, environmental human rights, and North Korean human rights.

The Taiwan Foundation for Democracy will host its 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award on December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016, the International Human Rights Day. The AFAD delegation, led by its Secretary-General, will come to Taipei to receive the award. The Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award includes an award trophy and a grant of US\$100,000 to support the AFAD for the organization's continuous efforts and contribution to this important human rights issue.

Media Contact:

Tel: +886-2-2708-0100 #607 Ms. Hung-Ya Lien

Fax: +886-2-2708-1148

Email: [award@tfd.org.tw](mailto:award@tfd.org.tw)

## **Attachment**

### **Preliminary Review Panel**

1. Mr. Yu-Jen Kao, Chairman of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Foundation
2. Dr. Michael Hsin-Huang Hsiao, Distinguished Research Fellow of Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica
3. Dr. Cheng-wen Tsai, TFD Board member
4. Dr. Sandy Yu-Lan Yeh, TFD Board member
5. Dr. Chang-Ling Huang, Professor of Department of Political Science, National Taiwan University
6. Dr. Hua-Mei Chiu, Assistant Professor of Department of Sociology, National Sun Yat-sen University
7. Dr. Szu-chien Hsu, TFD President

### **Final Review Panel**

1. Dr. Nisuke Ando, former Director of the Kyoto Human Rights Research Institute and former Chair of the United Nations Human Rights Committee
2. Dr. Sima Samar, Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and the 2008 Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award laureate
3. Ms. Asma Jahangir, former Chairperson of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and former United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief
4. Mr. Arch Puddington, Senior Vice President for Research of Freedom House
5. Mr. Nicholas Bequelin, East Asia Director of Amnesty International
6. Hon. Su Jia-chyuan, TFD Chairman
7. Dr. Szu-chien Hsu, TFD President