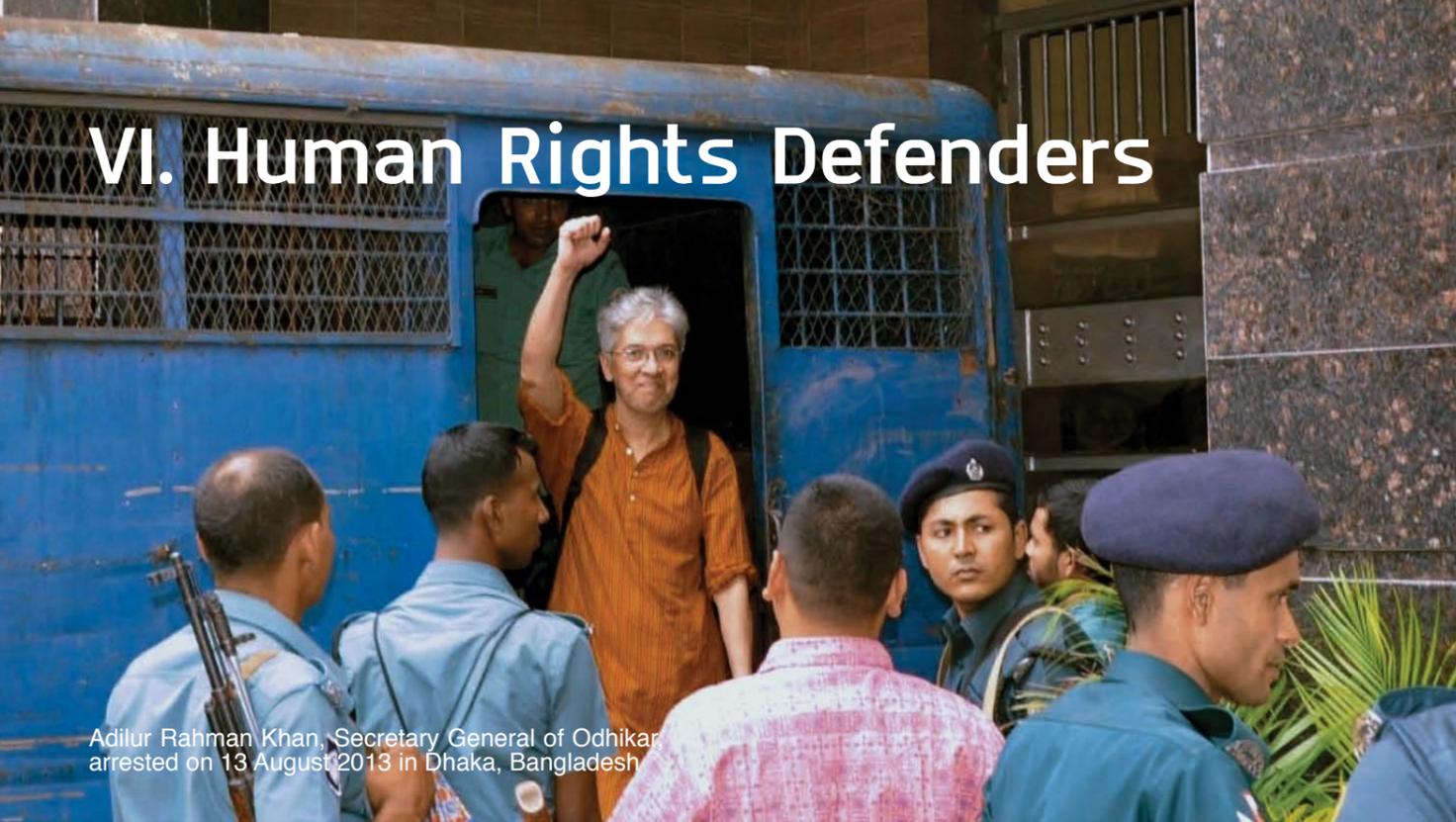


VI. Human Rights Defenders



Adilur Rahman Khan, Secretary General of Odhikar arrested on 13 August 2013 in Dhaka, Bangladesh

In her final report to the Human Rights Council in December 2013 (A/HRC/25/55), Margaret Sekaggya, the former UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of HRDs observed that the space for civil society and (HRD) space had visibly shrunk in certain regions. Asia is no exception and HRDs on the frontline in the promotion and protection of human rights are often the target of threats and intimidation by state and non-state actors. FORUM-ASIA seeks to protect the rights and promote the role of HRDs by providing urgent assistance and protection to those at risk, advocating for an enabling environment for HRDs to conduct their work freely; as well as training to strengthen their capacity to conduct effective campaigning and advocacy at the national, regional and international levels.

Protection Plan For HRDs at Risk

FORUM-ASIA has developed a "Protection Plan for Human Rights Defenders at Risk", which responds to urgent cases of HRDs in need of assistance by facilitating and providing safety measures, such as temporary relocation, trial monitoring for those brought before judicial institutions and other types of urgent assistance. Through the Protection Plan, FORUM-ASIA is able to provide quick, concrete and appropriate assistance to those at risk.

Promoting International Standards

In an effort to popularise the UN Declaration on HRDs, FORUM-ASIA has translated the UN Declaration on HRDs into various Asian languages. As of 2014, FORUM-ASIA had translated the Declaration into 20 Asian languages which are used in the various trainings undertaken for grassroots defenders.

Linking Human Rights with Development – 2nd Glo-cal Advocacy Leadership in Asia Academy (GALAA)

FORUM-ASIA co-organised with the Asia Democracy Network (ADN) and Asia Development Alliance (ADA) the second edition of a training program designed to enhance the capacity and shared understanding of the next generation of HRDs in Asia. In the context of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, 30 participants from 13 countries across the region gathered in Bangkok to develop strategic global and local or "glocal" actions on key human rights, development and democracy issues as well as related regional and international processes.



Participants of 2nd GALAA

Regional Consultation on Model Law

Sixteen years after the adoption of the 1998 UN Declaration on HRDs, Asian States have yet to incorporate it into domestic law. As a result, HRDs across the region continue to face severe repression and are deprived of the protection laid out in the Declaration.

In April, FORUM-ASIA and the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) brought together over 20 HRDs from across the region, as well as regional and international observers to address this gap in protection and exchange national experiences.

Building Platforms – 6th Asian Regional Human Rights Defenders Forum

In December, FORUM-ASIA together with the Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP) and the Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA) held the 6th Asian Regional Human Rights Defenders Forum (AHRDF6) in Manila, Philippines.

Since 2001, FORUM-ASIA has been organising this platform for HRDs to share their experiences, providing a safe venue for testimonials on human rights abuses and briefings on national situations.

At its heart, the Forum aspires to build solidarity and collaboration among HRDs to act on common issues and struggles. 169 HRDs (half of whom are women) from 22 countries in the region gathered to discuss protection initiatives and the challenges related to their implementation and the establishment of national HRD networks and platforms.

In the presence and full participation of the newly appointed UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Michel Forst, who also opened the event, the AHRDF6 facilitated several discussions, including on WHRDs, that resulted in the **adoption of a declaration** outlining the steps that national, regional and international actors should take to strengthen protection of HRDs.

Protecting HRDs with online tools

Launched in December at the AHRDF6, the Asian HRD Portal is an online tool highlighting the challenges and risks faced by HRDs in Asia. The Portal also provides online campaign tools, a database and map of cases detailing threats and violence against HRDs, and resource materials for the general public as well as for HRDs.



AHRD
Asian Human Rights Defenders
asianhrds.forum-asia.org

Women Human Rights Defenders – Integrating a Gender Perspective in the Work of the UN Human Rights Council

In the global North and South alike, women HRDs (WHRDs) are murdered, kidnapped, tortured, raped, and harassed because of the work they do, but are at particular risk because of their gender.

As the HRC strengthens its work on gender related issues, FORUM-ASIA together with 12 other member organisations of the International Coalition of Women Human Rights Defenders, made a joint statement at the **27th Session of the HRC** September 2014 to emphasise the critical need to integrate analysis and reporting on WHRDs, who demand protection, respect and fulfilment of all human rights.

Go to [FORUM-ASIA's website](#) for a snap shot of WHRDs in Asia in 2014.

STOP
FORCED
CONVERSION

2nd Anniversary of Sombath's Disappearance

2014 marked the second anniversary of Sombath Somphone's disappearance. A Laotian civil society leader, Sombath pushed tirelessly for greater civil society space and the right of the rural poor and youth to have a voice in the development of society and governance. Despite the Lao Government's pledge to investigate his disappearance, the authorities' probe has proved inadequate and unproductive.



Remembering Munir

On 7 September 2004, Munir Said Thalib, was found dead on a flight from Jakarta to Amsterdam having been poisoned with arsenic.

While 3 people were convicted for Munir's murder, the Indonesian Government has yet to conduct a thorough, **impartial and effective investigation** to bring to justice those who actually planned and ordered the murder.

On 12 September 2014, FORUM-ASIA co-signed an **open letter** along with KontraS and international NGOs FLDs, ICJ and FIDH, to the President of Indonesia Joko Widodo. The letter urged the Indonesian President to publish the 2006 Fact-Finding Team's report on the investigation into Munir's assassination and conduct a credible, thorough, and impartial investigation.

In solidarity with Irom and the people of Manipur

Irom Sharmila Chanu, an activist poet, and recipient of several human rights awards, including the 2007 Gwanju Prize, has for the last 14 years been on a hunger strike demanding the Indian government repeal the Armed Forces (Special Power) Act 1958 (AFSPA) in Manipur.

The draconian AFSPA effectively grants the security services immunity from prosecution and extensive and wide reaching powers to arrest and search anyone with the use of force. Irom began her hunger strike in 2000 following the killing of 10 people by a paramilitary force in Imphal. Shortly after she was arrested and charged with attempting to commit suicide, a criminal offence under an outdated provision of the Indian Penal Code. Irom has been arrested and released every year since.

In November, FORUM-ASIA together with the May 18 Memorial Foundation and the Just Peace Foundation jointly organised an international solidarity mission with Sharmila's fellow laureates of the Gwangju Prize for Human Rights, to meet with Irom and communities living in Manipur, which has been rendered a military state under the AFSPA.

