



ANNI Delegation in Taipei, Taiwan

VII. National Human Rights Institutions

2014 marked the 20th anniversary of the Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions (Paris Principles). The Paris Principles, set out the minimum standards and normative framework for the effective work and functioning of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and are considered to be the benchmark on which to determine a NHRI's credibility and legitimacy. Nevertheless, the Paris Principles are increasingly at risk of losing their relevance and role in the national protection system with NHRIs continuously being exposed to threats that erode their independence, credibility and public legitimacy.

While the establishment of NHRIs suggests States are willing to subject themselves to scrutiny and accountability, several key and recurring practices exist that negate institutional compliance with the Paris Principles in law and practice. Executive overreach and interference; inadequate resourcing, and limitations to jurisdiction, slow response to urgent situations of human rights violations; and a lack of timely interventions have significantly undermined the mandate and competence of NHRIs in the region to fulfil their roles.

FORUM-ASIA has been advocating for the strengthening of the independence and effectiveness of NHRIs in Asia, including through its role as Secretariat of the Asian NGO Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI). In August, ANNI published its **2014 Report on the Performance and Establishment of National Human Rights Institutions in Asia**. This annual assessment of NHRIs in Asia serves as an advocacy tool to enhance the work and functioning of NHRIs, compiling contributions from organisations representing 14 countries and analysing national level developments over the course of 2013 and significant events in the first quarter of 2014. In particular, the Report focuses on issues of independence and effectiveness of NHRIs and their engagement with other stakeholders, especially civil society organisations (CSOs). ANNI formally launched its report in September in New Delhi, during the ANNI Regional Conference, where a series of panels sought to identify challenges and obstacles affecting the work and functioning of Asian NHRIs in the fulfilment of their mandate.

Another main thrust of FORUM-ASIA and ANNI's work is advocating for the establishment of independent and effective NHRIs in countries where such institutions do not yet exist. This is particularly significant where other domestic protection and accountability mechanisms remain weak or inadequate.

Unity of purpose through ANNI

Formed in 2006, The Asian NGO Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI) brings together thirty-one organisations from 18 States across Asia. Its annual reports are the only assessment of its kind analysing the performance of national human rights institutions and the challenges they face as per their mandate.



National Advocacy Campaigns

Countries without NHRIs/Taiwan

In April, ANNI held its annual Regional Consultation with members and partners in Taipei. The location was a strategic choice, capitalising on the recent Sunflower Revolution and in a bid to galvanise local efforts to establish an independent NHRI in Taiwan. Go to **FORUM-ASIA's website** for more information on this and the national workshop conducted prior to the Regional Consultation.

NHRIs/in crisis: the Maldives

The summons and subsequent charges filed against members of the Human Rights Commission of the Maldives (HRCM) in October and following the submission of its independent assessment to the HRC of the country's human rights situation is a glaring and worrying example of government overreach. **ANNI expressed its condemnation** in an open letter to the President of the Republic of the Maldives. The Government was urged to withdraw all criminal charges against members of the HRCM and ensure the Commission is able to operate in an environment free from government interference, threats, intimidation, harassment and reprisals.



Members of the Human Rights Commission of the Maldives (HRCM)

Public Accountability - Burma and Bangladesh

In September, ANNI together with Burma Partnership and Equality Myanmar launched the national report on the performance of the Myanmar Human Rights Commission (MHRC) before members of the media and civil society in Yangon. A similar launch and public dialogue to stoke engagement and interest, while also ensuring sustained and public scrutiny was conducted in Bangladesh with the Chairperson of the NHRC, Dr. Mizanur Rahman.