

SDMA Issue Brief

Issue 5 - April to May 2013



Solidarity for
Democratization
Movements
in Asia



SOLIDARITY FOR DEMOCRATIZATION
MOVEMENTS IN ASIA



SDMA Issue Brief

Issue 5 April to May 2013

[SDMA Issue Brief on Human Rights and Democracy \(SDMA Issue Brief\)](#) is an E- quarterly published by SDMA. It contains the special reviews on Asian human rights and democracy as well as news of a variety of activities of member organizations of SDMA.*

*Solidarity for Democratization Movements in Asia or SDMA was launched at the 2010 Gwangju Asia Forum with the aim of working for the improvement of Asian human rights and democracy through regional cooperation and working in solidarity. At present FORUM-ASIA (Thailand), IDSPS, Imparsial (Indonesia), IID (Philippines), Odhikar (Bangladesh), PSPD, The May 18 Memorial Foundation (Korea) are joined as member organizations.

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.....and so on.

In case of any suggestion and/or feedback:

Any suggestions and/or feedback about this Issue Brief can be sent by email to 518.org@gmail.com, the SDMA Secretariat.



News from the SDMA Member Organizations



1. Synthesis of South Asian Network against Torture and Impunity (SANTI): Discussing Torture in South Asia

Odhikar, in collaboration with the European Union, organised the meeting of South Asian Network against Torture and Impunity (SANTI) from February 22-23, 2013 at BRAC Centre Inn, Dhaka, Bangladesh. It was a significant consultation with the scope to review the past activities of SANTI and renew activity plan for the future. The Dhaka consultation is particularly significant due to the fact that torture in South Asia is on the rise. It was also highlighted that the governments in South Asian countries are becoming more 'innovative' in the methods used to commit torture. The issue of keeping reservation to the Convention against Torture ratification by the South Asian governments was also discussed. It was emphasised that SANTI shall be active to push the South Asian governments to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT). The Dhaka meeting attempted to strategise SANTI's actions to combat impunity in South Asia.

Background

SANTI was formally established through a consultation by a group of human rights organisations from South Asia on the side event of a regional meeting on Torture and Impunity organised by Odhikar in 2003. The network raised its voice by sending a widely publicized press release against torture and impunity at the regional level. The second consultation was held in 2006 and the third consultation was held at Dhaka on August 9, 2009, which was organised by Odhikar. During that meeting Kirity Roy of MASUM was elected as the coordinator of SANTI.



Summary

After four years, the Dhaka consultation of South Asian Network against Torture and Impunity (SANTI) was organised with focus on torture as a socio-cultural-political construction and discussed the means to combat impunity. It highlighted judicial ineffectiveness as a contributing factor for committing torture. The consultation argued that the merchandising of politics is protecting the interests of the business elite and bureaucrat at the cost of the dignity of ordinary people. Torture in South Asia was termed as the government's tool to eliminate all challenges against its establishment. The consultation emphasised on proper documentation of torture cases, sub-regional solidarity building and connecting SANTI with international efforts combating torture.

Participation

The Dhaka consultation was joined by 30 national and regional delegates, including activists from India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Thailand, human rights defenders, academicians, lawyers, researchers, journalists, writers and politicians. The consultation followed an open interactive discussion model to reach maximum participation. The SANTI meeting allowed the national participants to interact with other South Asian activists.



Approach

The two-day consultation was also a revisit to the overall activities of SANTI, its necessity, its objectives, and ways to move forward. The floor overwhelmingly acknowledged the urgency of SANTI's presence. The consultation introduced the present context of torture in South Asia. The consultation's approach included the following heads:

- it linked the philosophical grounds of torture with its legal and practical shortcomings.
- it viewed torture as an outcome of faults in the socio-econo-political structure.
- torture is explained beyond the definition provided by the UN and its scope was extended to non-state actors as another party committing torture.

Legal Issues Related to Torture

The consultation shed light on the legal aspects of torture. Starting from *the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)*, the consultation discussed the state of domestic laws in South Asian countries. The consultation argued the following issues regarding the legal aspects of torture:

- The "Torture Convention" was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10 December 1984 (resolution 39/46). The Convention entered into force on 26 June 1987 after it had been ratified by 20 States. CAT defines torture as "any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person ... by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity."¹ However, the definition of torture which

¹ CAT, Art 1 (1).

appears in the Torture Declaration was considered by the participants not to be precise enough and was criticized on various points.

- The Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in New York on 18 December 2002, and it entered into force on 22 June 2006. As of September 2012 the Protocol has 71 signatories and 63 parties. The SANTI consultation urged the South Asian governments to ratify the protocol.
- Domestic laws are barely effective to stop torture. In most of the countries in South Asia, torture is not criminalised. The only exception is Sri Lanka. However, the application of the torture law in Sri Lanka is challenged by the capacity and motivation of the Judiciary.
- The laws giving impunity to the officials are the most challenging aspect to fight against torture in South Asia.
- There are a significant numbers of special laws in South Asian countries. The governments are using these 'Anti-terror Laws' and 'Special Power Acts' to commit torture.
- Many law courts in South Asian countries are yet to evolved to challenge torture. Some are not motivated. There is also the issue of capacity to deal with torture issue.
- A significant number of law officials are not motivated to deal with torture issues. There is also a gap in the capacity among the lawyers to deal with torture cases.
- Witness protection laws are either non-existent or weak. The process involved in the witness protection is not well funded.
- The Law of Evidence and other related laws are framed according to the old British laws, which are not capable to address the crucial issues involved in torture today.

Areas of Law	Recommended Steps
CAT	SANTI needs to monitor the application of CAT and South Asian governments' reporting to the Committee.
OPCAT	There should be stronger initiatives for ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT).
Domestic Laws	SANTI needs to advocate for laws that criminalise torture in South Asian countries; and those that stop impunity by the officials committing torture.
Special Laws	Applications of the 'special laws' including the 'Anti-Terror Laws' and 'Special Power Acts' need to be monitored.
Motivating the Judiciary	There is a need to run programmes to motivate the Judiciary against torture.
Developing Legal Expertise	The capacity of the law officials and the lawyers, in relation to the legal aspects of torture, needs to be increased.
Witness Protection	The Witness Protection Act needs to be updated and the system for the witness protection needs to be well-funded. There must be activism to raise awareness for the need for such a law.
Evidence Act	The present concerns related with torture cases need to be included in the Evidence Acts.

Associated Issues of Torture

The consultation emphasised on enabling legal measures to combat impunity. In addition to that, the consultation elaborated the following associated issues related with torture in South Asia:

- **Merchandising of Politics:** Politics in South Asian countries is increasingly controlled by the business interests of certain groups. Governments are thus acting to protect the corporate interests. In doing so, if it

needs to abolish peoples' protest, it resorts to torture. Thus the security agencies are becoming the government's right hand to commit torture, with a guarantee of impunity.

- **The Cultural Conflict:** With the transformation to Western -dominated modernisation, South Asian cultural identity is heavily in conflict. Additionally, the elite is favouring the cultural transformation, where the voice of the larger population of dalits, minorities, and religious thinkers are denied. To control their voice, the torture is accelerated.
- **Development Wave:** The move towards infrastructural development often leaves the people to cope with an unfamiliar and unwelcome model. Over exploitation of nature, indiscriminate use of land belong to indigenous people; and polluting the environment have becoming common in South Asia. Any opposition to those resorts to torture against people.
- **Power Politics:** The governments in South Asian countries are using torture to eliminate challenges from the Opposition. Often torture comes with other crimes, such as enforced disappearance, countering protests or demonstrations and interrogation.

National Issues of Torture

The nature of torture in South Asia significantly varies from country to country. Though the CAT has suggested that every State Party take certain steps to combat torture, the state of application of such steps are barely taken. Article 2 of CAT provides that, '[e]ach State party shall take effective legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent acts of torture'. The prohibition against torture shall be absolute and shall be upheld also in a state of war and in other exceptional circumstances. Considering the national responsibility, the SANTI consultation described the following major dimensions of torture at the national level:

Country	Torture Issues
Bangladesh	Torture is used as the government's tool to maintain its power. Torture is happening due to the poor performance of Judiciary against torture cases. It appears that the politicisation and localisation of administration and security agencies is aiding the government to commit growing acts of torture.
India	The elite politicians are conducting torture to maintain their power. The worst victims of torture are the ideological minority, dalits, and indigenous. Right to self-determination of the people has been denied with torture. Stronger Judiciary is a must to combat impunity.
Nepal	The transition of the country allowed impunity to the many who have committed torture. The government agencies as well as the non-state actors have committed torture and are still posing equal threats. A fair trail to punish the perpetrators is vital to have national reconciliation.
Pakistan	Torture against women is significant. The government is misusing the Sharia and its wrong interpretation to commit torture, especially against women.
Sri Lanka	The Government is maintaining torture as an indispensable tool for its power. There is hardly any scope to raise any voice against the government. The Judiciary is not capable to address the torture issue.

Some cross-country issues of torture also were discussed. For example, the Indo-Bangla border killing and torture by the BSF. It was agreed by all that the SAARC is not equipped to deal with torture. There is neither any sub-regional legal document addressing torture nor any comprehensive human rights instrument in South Asia.

Comparing South Asia and South East Asia

The SANTI consultation also discussed the variations between torture in South and South-east Asia. Giving the reference of Thailand, the consultation argued that torture in these two sub-regions had different cultural roots but were commonly used by the government to maintain a stronger control over the people. It also described the following differences:

South Asian Context	South-east Asian Context
Torture by the government is mainly to maintain its power.	The degree of torture to maintain the interest of the business entities is higher.
No regional mechanism to address the torture issue.	ASEAN Human Rights Council and ASEAN Human Rights Declaration are present.
There is a vibrant media and NGO activism to raise voices against torture.	The state of media independence and NGO activity in this case is relatively low.





News from the SDMA Member Organizations



<Peace and Disarmament>

1. Call for Peace in the Korean Peninsula

Year 2013 marks the 60th anniversary of the armistice agreement in the Korean peninsula. However, the Korean peninsula is still under conflict and tension fills the air. Following a rocket launch by North Korea in December 2012, the UN Security Council passed the Resolution 2087 to condemn the launch and impose new sanctions to North Korea. As a result, North Korea carried on the third nuclear test in 12 February 2013. North Korea also took strong stance by announcing that the armistice agreement between the UN joint forces are invalidate in response to the South Korea-U.S. Key Resolve joint military drill.

Even though North Korea deserves criticism for its nuclear test, neighboring countries including South Korea should open a peaceful dialogue as an ultimate solution. The UN Security Council's actions have been counterproductive for its previous resolutions related to North Korea have fueled North Korea's nuclear test. Likewise North Korea's actions that ignore the UN resolutions are self-defeating for they only jeopardises its own national security and economic development. PSPD has raised our concerns on surging tensions in the region and reiterates that only a peaceful dialogue among various stakeholders stands a chance to defuse the precarious current situation. For further details, please see below link.

23 January 2013: [Statement] North and South Korea should Start Dialogue Immediately, the Only Fundamental Solution (<http://www.peoplepower21.org/English/991349>)

12 February 2013: [Statement] PSPD Condemns North Korea's Nuclear Test that threatens Peace on the Korean Peninsula (<http://www.peoplepower21.org/English/994997>)

2. Please don't forget Gangjeong Village

Violence of the police and private security forces, and human rights infringements in Gangjeong Village are still prevalent in 2013. Jeju Naval Base construction site is pandemonium. Gangjeong villagers and human rights defenders are trying to stop trucks from entering into a construction site every 30 minutes to one hour with bear hands. Almost ten police officers grab two arms and two legs of one protester and throw him or her out away. Even so, protesters go back in position. Police officers again grab and move protesters to let trucks enter the site. At the end of last year, villagers and peace activist relayed one hundred bows for more than ten days in front of the National Assembly calling for 2013 budget reduction for the naval base construction. Despite their earnestness, around 201 billion won was passed for Jeju Naval Base construction 2013 budget with three conditions The National Assembly gave 70 days to sweep off a concern of navy centered base, execute feasibility study whether two 150,000 toned cruises can embark at the same time, and make an agreement to use the base for both private and the Navy. The outcome of the study was supposed to be reported to the National Assembly and the budget be executed accordingly. 70 days are not even enough to review and verify numerous problems. However, the Ministry of Defense only took two days to complete study. Construction did not stop during that period. The Ministry of Defense has been ignoring recommendations from the National Assembly which represents wills of the people, and enforcing the construction. Moreover, the police who are supposed to protect civilians trample and even impose heavy fines against villagers and peace activists. Even so, supports of the people have never stopped for the last six years. This is why we will never give up.

<Civil and Political Rights related activities>

1. Three legal proceedings of the Public Interest Law Center of PSPD were selected for The Hankyoreh 21's the best verdict of the year and the verdicts of the year 2012

<2012 The best verdict of the year>

- The Constitutional Court unanimously upheld Internet real-name verification unconstitutional
 - 2012 The verdicts of the year
 - The Seoul High Court put a break on a practice of Internet Portals' handing over communication •data to law enforcement agencies on request
 - The Seoul Central District Court said email search and seizure without defining a period illegal
- Reference: The Hankyoreh 21, Volume 941, 24 December 2012 'Goodbye MB, Goodbye futile laws for the last five years'

The Hankyoreh 21 has chosen three lawsuits planned and proceeded by the Public Interest Law Center of PSPD for 2012 the best verdict and the verdicts of the year. The best verdict is awarded to the decision that Internet real-name verification practice violates the constitution. Four full time activists of PSPD, the OhmyNews, YTN, and YouTube Netizens brought this issue in 2010 and the Constitutional Court unanimously decided on 23 August that Internet Real-name verification infringed the freedom of anonymous expression of Internet users, the freedom of the press for information and communication service providers and the freedom of self-determination for protecting private information. One of the verdicts of the year selected the Seoul High Court's sentence ordering Naver to pay 500,000 won for damages. The Public Interest Law Center has sued Naver on 15 July 2010 for damages on a charge of submitting user's information to the police without consent. Another winning decision was made on email search and seizure regardless of relevance to a case which the Public Interest Law Center filed a claim for damages on 12 October 2012. Professor Ju Kyung-bok, a candidate for Seoul City education superintendent in 2008 was investigated for violating the Election Law and prosecutors seized and searched all his emails for seven years. A Human Rights Defender Park Rae-gun, former co-chairman of the Yongsan Tragedy Response Committee was investigated for violating the Law on Assembly and Demonstration and the police inspected all emails communicated between 1 November 2008 and 12 March 2009 without a notice. The Seoul Central District Court ruled that searching and seizing emails of seven years including personal emails irrelevant to a charge did not comply with proportionality principle of compulsory investigation. On this ground, negligence of prosecutors was acknowledged and they were asked to compensate professor Ju with 7 million won. However, the case of Park Rae-gun was regrettably dismissed that the court found searching emails of four months for the period close to a suspicion reasonable. The Public Interest Law Center will continue to work for securing and extending the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the basic right secured in the Constitution. It will keep filing a claim for damage if an information and communication service provider hands over users' personal information to an investigator without consent.

2. Oppose the appointment of Lee Dong-Heup as the president of the Constitutional Court

A president of the Constitutional Court must have a stronger will to protect basic rights of the people, rational values and be independent from appointive authorities than any other heads. Does Lee Dong-heup have these qualities? The Center for Judiciary Watch has been tied up with verifying qualification of LEE. Together with the Lawyers for Democratic Society and the Democratic Legal Studies Association, PSPD held a discussion on 17 January to review decisions of Lee in the past which showed biased political opinions and ill historical view. The analysis report was published on 20 January which studied all 954 cases where entire judges of the Constitutional Court participated during Lee's term. Surprisingly, there were many opinions of Lee which disrespected basic rights of the people and did not comply with spirits of the constitution making people doubt and question about his qualification. Representative examples are as follow.

- ① Confirmed blocking Seoul Square for pedestrian unconstitutional
- ② Constitutional appeal for a false communication charge (Article 47, Paragraph 1 of the Fundamental Act for Telecommunication)
- ③ Confirmed prohibition of online election campaign and political expression unconstitutional (Article 93, Paragraph 1 of the Public Officials Election Act and other)
- ④ Confirmed sanitary conditions set for imported US beef unconstitutional
- ⑤ Appeal to review constitutionality for including pending detention days
- ⑥ Confirmed forbearance in relation to forced comfort women for Japanese army and atomic bomb victims unconstitutional

- ⑦ Appeal to review constitutionality for punishing 'Anal sex' by the Military Criminal Law
- ⑧ Confirmed unconstitutionality for ordering not to bring in forbidden books by the Military
- ⑨ The second dispute of jurisdiction over the Media Law
- ⑩ Review unconstitutionality of joint panel provisions
- ⑪ Claim to withdraw warnings on the program PD Journal <Pro-Japanese are alive II>
- ⑫ Appeal to review unconstitutionality for taking over properties of Korean collaborators with imperial Japanese

Based on the assessment as above, PSPD held a press conference 'Lee Dong-heup, not qualified for a president of the Constitutional Court' together with human rights and civil organizations in front of the National Assembly on appointment hearing days. After monitoring two-day hearings, it becomes more obvious that he does not meet requirements that PSPD urged the Special Committee for National Assembly Hearing to submit 'not qualified' decision.

3. Whistle blower Lee Hae-gwan should not fight alone

Lee Hae-gwan is a whistle blower who revealed that KT has applied international call rate to phone voters for 'Seven Wonders of Nature' which was supposed to use KT intelligence server and charge for local rate. After Lee exposed this incident to the press and Anti-Corruption & Civil Rights Commission (ACRC), he was transferred to Gapyeong branch last May. At that time, PSPD and the Supporters for Public Interest Whistle Blowers requested ACRC to protect Lee. The request was accepted and a decision was made to withdraw his transfer. However, KT had refused to accept Lee's applications for illness leave and day off to participate in an award ceremony of anti-corruption organizations, and recently fired him for being absent and leave without a notice. What KT did obviously violated article 15 of the Whistle Blower Protection Act (prevention of giving disadvantage). Especially, giving disadvantage on a position can be punished by the Criminal Law. The article 30, paragraph 2 for punishment, clause 1 of the Whistle Blower's Act states imprisonment of maximum two years or fine of maximum 20 million won can be sentenced. Therefore, Lee and the Supporters for Public Interest Whistle Blowers submitted a request again on 10 January to ACRC to reinstate Lee's position and investigate if KT's decisions on Lee have been lawful. The Supporters will not stop helping whistle blowers like Lee that no righteous whistle blower fights alone. Your concerns will be a big help.

<Socio-Economic Rights related Activities>

1. Emart above the constitution

Three basic rights of labor; the right for organization, collective bargaining and collective action are guaranteed in the constitution and the National Labor Relations Act. However, Shinsegae Emart seems to stand above the constitution. Emart has made a counter-union team to destruct and suppress labor union, and illegally watched employees. When a book <Critical biography of Jeon Tae-il> was found, they hunted down an owner. In addition, there was an order not to respond to a survey of the Civil Honor Labor Ombudsman of the Seoul City Government. At the group level of Shinsegae, a manual 'How to deal with unions' was made and sent down to affiliates. When these evil acts were revealed to the public, Emart instantly released a public apology stating that "For some documents, a branch officer was too obsequious that arbitrary overacted". It also said to conduct internal investigation and audit followed by questioning and punishment, and promised to do the best to prevent arbitrary behavior of executives so that no employees process their works not in the direction of company's policy". It is such a shameful statement putting all the blames on individual executives. This is apparently deceiving Emart workers and people watching over the situation twice. Hence, a Joint action committee established by PSPD, Korea confederation of trade unions, Korea confederation of private service workers' union and Jang Hana lawmaker's office urged Emart to stop unethical and human rights violating acts of suppressing labor union and it will fight for workers until settled. hilariously, internet Emart mall sells <Critical biography of Jeon Tae-il> at 22% discounted rate.

2. PSPD People's Economic Committee appealed on the decision of Prosecutors' office to clear the Lone Star of charges

PSPD and the Lawyers for Democratic Society have pressed charges against Kim Seok-dong a chairman of the Financial Service Commission and eight others for negligence on 21 November 2012. The accused gave up verifying whether the Lone star was non-financial business (industrial capital) before ordering forced sale. However, the Seoul Central District Court decided on 8 January not to litigate the Lone Star and dismissed all the indictments made by more than 20 people from civil organizations. Hence, PSPD, the Lawyers for Democratic Society and the Joint Action for the Lone Star who have watched illegal conducts and 'earn and run' of Lone Star held a press conference on 24 January in front of the Supreme Prosecutors' Office denouncing court's decision, and submitted a bill of complaint. Prosecutors' office has delayed to announce results of investigations for lone star

related indictments and decided not to bring them to court as soon as Park Geun-hye was elected as president. This is no more than a typical biased investigation. If this appeal is denied, PSPD and the Lawyers for Democratic Society will make a motion for judicial ruling against prosecutors' non-charge decision (On refusal of prosecutor's non-litigation, requesting directly to a court to judge right or wrong on prosecutor's decision. It will not stop until the truth of Lone star related illegal conducts and absurdities are found.



News from the SDMA Member Organizations



1. New interns of the May 18 Memorial Foundation

Two International interns of the May 18 Memorial Foundation started their brand new life in Gwangju, Republic of Korea from 5 March 2013. Mr. Kee Do (Foundation for Education and Development, Thailand) from Burma and Ms. Szu-Yu Yen (National Chengchi University) from Taiwan will participate in organizing a variety of memorial events of the May 18 Memorial Foundation and conduct a research on Korean human rights and democratization movements for 10 months.

The May 18 Memorial Foundation has recruited 2 interns every year and provide an opportunity for them to broaden their understanding of Korean democracy and human rights, and to build networks with other activists since 2005. So far, 21 interns from 13 countries have accomplished their internship successfully.



2. Grant for Human Rights and Democracy Projects in Overseas 2013

The May 18 Memorial Foundation announced 6 successful organizations from 5 countries to receive Grant for Human Rights and Democracy Projects in Overseas 2013. The foundation supports 6 projects from 6 organizations working in the field of judicial monitoring, torture and trauma rehabilitation, election monitoring, democracy movement commemoration projects, fact-finding missions and legal support for human rights victims.

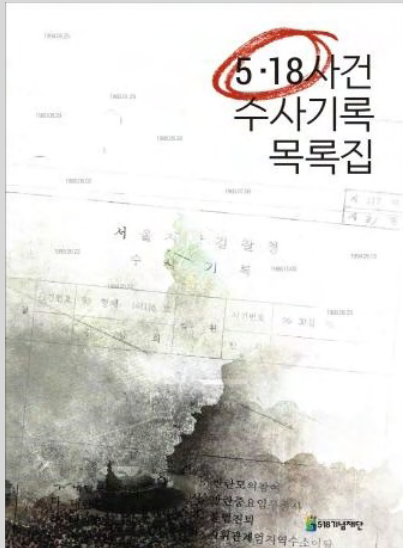
The recipient organizations are as follows:

- Alliance for Peace and Development (APDN), Nepal
- Banglar Manabadhikar Suraksha Mancha (MASUM), India
- United Rural Development Organization (URDO), Pakistan
- Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD), Philippines
- Centre for Victims of Torture, Nepal
- Transparency International, Sri Lanka



3. Publication of “The May 18 Investigation Record Collection” and May 18 children’s book, “Bicycle”

1) The May 18 Investigation Record Collection

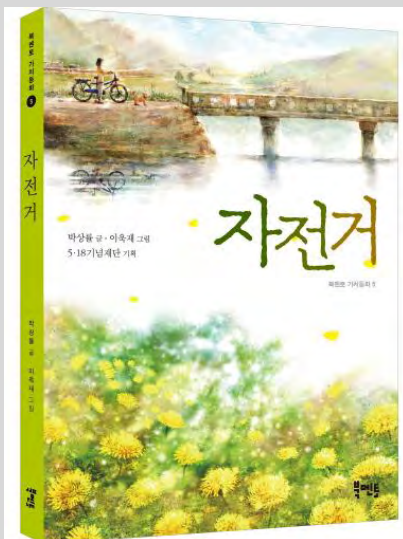


The May 18 Memorial Foundation published “The May 18 Investigation Record Collection” including 7,611 legal documents. It contains information recorded from Supreme Prosecutors’ Office as per Supreme Courts’ ruling to release the information on military coup on 12 December in 1979 and the May 18 Massacre in 1990, and documents from the Truth Commission at the Ministry of National Defense, which were open to public on 2011.

The investigation records amount to approximately 180,000 pages with 15 meters tall, including records of about 600 people, ranging from accusations from 294 civilians on May 1994 to the termination of investigation indicting 16 perpetrators including two former presidents.

The collection is expected to be distributed to research institutes and other relevant organizations in Korea.

2) Bicycle



The May 18 Children’s book “Bicycle” was released on February 2013. The publication project, planned by the May 18 Memorial Foundation and supported by Gwangju Metropolitan Office of Education, was realized in collaboration with Park Sang-Ryul, the writer and Lee Uk-Jae, the visual artist.

In Bicycle, City of Gwangju in 1980’s is depicted far from any sort of political or historical prejudice through the eyes of an elementary school girl called Kotnim. The bicycle functions as the medium between the World and a girl, and is a symbol of the teary history of Gwangju. The book shows us that each chapter of history is written by respective individuals and these gathered chapters constitute “today.”

SDMA Member organizations

FORUM-ASIA (Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development) Thailand

FORUM-ASIA is a membership-based regional human rights organization committed to the promotion and protection of all human rights including the right to development. FORUM-ASIA was founded in 1991 in Manila and its regional Secretariat has been located in Bangkok since 1994. At present, FORUM-ASIA has 47 member organisations across Asia.

As a membership-based regional human rights organisation, FORUM-ASIA works to promote and protect all human rights, including the right to development, through collaboration and cooperation among human rights organizations and defenders in Asia.

FORUM-ASIA is committed to building a peaceful, just, equitable and ecologically sustainable community of peoples and societies in Asia, where all human rights of all individuals, groups and peoples-in particular, the poor, marginalised and discriminated against-are fully respected and realised in accordance with internationally accepted human rights norms and standards.

FORUM-ASIA's goal is to strengthen FORUM-ASIA's leading and coordinating role in building a regional human rights movement through international solidarity action and engagement with states and other stakeholders in Asia.

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IMPARSIAL, the Indonesian Human Rights Monitor Indonesia

Established in 2002 by a number of activists who are well known and have prominently advocated for victims of human rights violations for many years, Imparsial aims at promoting the application of internationally recognised HR standards in public policy and practice. In the arena of national human rights organisations, it has found its niche in the establishment of a standardised HR documentation system based on Huridocs, promoting alternative policies in the sense of improving national HR instruments, and instituting a comprehensive system for the protection of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs).

The issue of HRD becomes more relevant when the former executive director of Imparsial, Munir, was assassinated on 7 September 2004 on his way to the Netherlands. Imparsial sees its establishment as timely in a conjuncture where communal and political violence is increasing, the authority of state apparatuses including the military is broadening and the enactment of repressive laws are either already reality or imminent, partly as a consequence of the "War on Terrorism" in the aftermath of "911". Against these setbacks, Imparsial works at intensified efforts for legal reform, actions against continuing impunity and professionalisation of the work of HRDs. Coalitions with other civil society actors and active cooperation with relevant semi-governmental institutes like the National Commission on Human Rights are considered crucial. Imparsial is a limited association with 18 members and employs a staff of 12 persons and 3 volunteers. Imparsial's basic management instruments are developed in the course of the two first years of the existence of the organisation. The previous support to Imparsial is embarked on in the context of the multi-annual worldwide campaign of Hivos on a better protection of Human Rights Defenders (2003-2006).

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Odhikar Bangladesh

In October 1994, Odhikar (a Bangla word that means 'rights') came into being with the aim to create a wider monitoring and awareness raising system on the abuse of civil and political rights. The principal objectives of the organisation are to raise the awareness of human rights and its various abuses, on the one hand and to create a vibrant democratic system through election monitoring on the other. The organisation also performs policy advocacy to address the current human rights situation. Odhikar has no field or branch offices. Instead, it has trained more than 300 people all over the country to be human rights defenders, who are relied upon for information outside Dhaka. These activities help contribute to eventual positive steps towards the creation of transparency and accountability in the responsible sectors of the government with an aim to improve its human rights record and to facilitate an active democracy with the participation of people from all sections of society.

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IDSPS (Institute for Defense Security and Peace Studies) Indonesia

The Institute for Defense, Security and Peace Studies (IDSPS) was established in mid-2006 by some activists and academics concerned about security sector reform advocacy in the frame of strengthening the democratic transition in Indonesia post-1998. IDSPS works together with civil groups and society dedicated to a democratic and accountable governance, as well as strong involvement of the civil society in the security sector policy making.

IDSPS carries out policy research in the fields of defense and security, conflict resolutions and human rights; establishes dialogue with various stakeholders: civil society, the security sector, parliamentarians, and other corresponding institutions. These activities aims to push for policy acceleration in the security sector, strengthen the involvement of civil society organizations, and encourage peaceful resolutions for violent conflict and human rights violations.

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IID (Initiatives for International Dialogue) Philippines

Established in 1988, the Initiatives for International Dialogue (IID) is a Philippines-based advocacy institution promoting human security, democratization and people-to-people solidarity. IID conducts policy advocacy and campaign programs on Burma, Mindanao, Southern Thailand, West Papua, and East Timor. It established the Asia-Pacific Coalition for East Timor (APCET) in 1994 that spearheaded a regional people's solidarity movement for the then occupied nation. In 2000, it established the Mindanao Peoples Caucus (MPC) – a platform and network of grassroots organizations, communities and NGOs affected and engaged in the conflict in Mindanao. MPC meanwhile established the “Bantay Ceasefire” (Ceasefire Watch) a network of civilians in the conflict areas monitoring the implementation of the official ceasefire agreement between the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). And together with other peace networks, IID led the establishment of the Mindanao Peaceweavers (MPW), the broadest peace network for Mindanao in the country and currently serves as its secretariat.

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PSPD (People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy) Republic of Korea

Founded in 1994 by more than 200 members, the People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD) is a civil organization dedicated to promoting justice and human rights in Korean society through the participation of the people.

PSPD has been serving as a watchdog against the abuse of power. It has developed various activities to bring justice and democracy to many areas in our society: the PSPD evokes public awareness through campaigns, questioning social and political activities, filing administrative and public litigations, and petitioning legislation. The Civil Actions for 2000 General Election (the CAGE) and the Minority Shareholders' Campaign might be said to be the most successful activities.

PSPD has developed and coordinated a wide range of activities to bring about a systematic reform and to suggest counterproposals to various government policies and agendas. In this process, the PSPD has regarded independence and consistency as the most important principles of being a watchdog of power.

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The May 18 Memorial Foundation Republic of Korea

The May 18 Memorial Foundation is a non-profit organization established on August 30, 1994 by the surviving victims of the 1980 Gwangju Democratic Uprising, the victims families, and the citizens of Gwangju. The foundation aims to commemorate as well as continue the spirit and struggle and solidarity of the May 18 Uprising; to contribute to the peaceful reunification of Korea; and to work towards peace and human rights throughout the world. Thus the spirit of the May 18 is inherited and passed on, significantly influencing the progress of democracy in Korea.

Since its establishment, the foundation has carried out numerous projects in various fields, including organizing memorial events, establishing scholarships, fostering research, disseminating information to the public, publishing relevant materials, dispensing charity and welfare benefits, building international solidarity, and awarding the Gwangju Prize for Human Rights.

The SDMA Secretariat

The May 18 Memorial Foundation

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