



Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances

A world without *desaparecidos*



afad.asia@protonmail.com



disappeared-asia.org



(+63) 922 727 6877

AFAD Statement on International Week of the Disappeared 2026 Memory is Resistance: Carrying Hope, Demanding Truth May 2026

The Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD) and its member organisations mark the International Week of the Disappeared 2026 under the banner “*Memory is Resistance: Carrying Hope, Demanding Truth.*” The theme reflects the collective realities faced by organizations across the region in 2025, a year characterized by a volatile mix of grassroots mobilization and intensified state repression. As AFAD has noted, “Memory is our strength, and justice remains our demand”. It reflects the harsh realities organizations faced across Asia in 2025 and the power of collective remembrance to challenge silence and impunity. Memory, then, is the discipline through which families and defenders refuse the State’s preferred ending silence.

Every photograph held aloft at a vigil, every name read into a UN submission, every anniversary publicly observed is a refusal of the forgetting that enforced disappearance is designed to impose.

Institutional amnesia remains one of the greatest threats to justice for families of the disappeared. Across the region, governments continue to erase, deny, and minimize cases of enforced disappearance, while families face intimidation, fabricated charges, and a persistent absence of accountability. Yet remembering is not passive, it is a deliberate and powerful act of resistance. Keeping each case in public view and demanding answers is how families and activists confront impunity and insist on truth.

In **Sri Lanka**, an estimated 200,000 people disappeared across three periods of conflict — the southern uprisings of 1971 and 1987-1992, and the nearly three decades of armed conflict that ended in 2009. Yet the Office on Missing Persons (OMP) has confirmed the fate of only 19 individuals out of the nearly 19,000 cases reported to it, and does not publicly disclose its findings. Tamil mothers of those who surrendered at the end of the war have now called for an international inquiry, citing a complete loss of faith in domestic mechanisms. Families in the South have equally lost hope in the current government, which has remained silent on disappearances and has failed to pay the promised temporary allowance of Rs. 200,000 to affected families. Yet Tamil and Sinhalese mothers alike refuse to stop remembering. In the face of institutional silence and broken promises, their persistence is itself an act of resistance.

In the **Republic of Korea**, families of those forcibly disappeared by the North Korean regime, including Korean War abductees, unrepatriated prisoners of war, post-war abductees, victims of the “Paradise on Earth” operation, and missionaries detained since the 2010s, continue to wait for answers amid shrinking political support and fading public attention. The past year brought significant setbacks: the Ministry of Unification dissolved the dedicated Task Force for



Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances

A world without *desaparecidos*



afad.asia@protonmail.com



disappeared-asia.org



(+63) 922 727 6877

Abductees in October 2025, while in December 2025, President Lee Jae-myung and National Security Advisor Wi Seong-rak were unable to speak to the specifics of three South Korean missionaries detained in North Korea, a moment families experienced as a profound failure of duty. Yet civil society has persisted. NKHR organized walking tours retracing the routes along which Korean War abductees were forcibly taken, joined a coalition press conference demanding direct government dialogue with families, and engaged UN mechanisms including the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances. NKHR also ensured that consolation payments reached fifteen victims and families following the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's landmark recognition of the "Paradise on Earth" operation's illegality in August 2024. For families who have been waiting decades, these acts of remembrance are the only accountability they have been given..

In **Indonesia**, enforced disappearances continue to be used as a tool of state repression. Protesters have been subjected to short-term enforced disappearances through incommunicado detention during demonstrations against the Omnibus Law on Job Creation in 2020, the "Emergency Warning" protests in 2024, and in August 2025. Despite this persistent pattern, Indonesia has not yet ratified the ICPPED, having only signed it in 2010. The state continues to strengthen security institutions with long-standing records of serious human rights violations, from the New Order era atrocities to present-day abuses. This impunity was starkly illustrated on 12 March 2026, when KontraS Deputy Coordinator Andrie Yunus was targeted in an acid attack by individuals linked to the Strategic Intelligence Agency (BAIS) of the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI), after he publicly criticized militarization. The attack caused severe burns across 20% of his body and threatened permanent blindness in his right eye, a grim reminder of the ongoing dangers faced by human rights defenders in Indonesia.

In **Pakistan**, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, and shrinking civic space continue to rise. On 23 January 2026, human rights lawyers Imaan Zainab Mazari-Hazir and Hadi Ali Chattha were arbitrarily arrested and handed a combined 17-year prison sentence in apparent retaliation for representing families of the disappeared. The sit-in led by the Voice for Baloch Missing Persons (VBMP) outside the Quetta Press Club has now crossed its 6,140th day, with families recording fresh abductions almost weekly. The pattern has increasingly shifted toward short-term disappearances, where victims are abducted, held incommunicado, and released under intimidation. Chronic cases including Masood Janjua, Faisal Faraz, and Atiq ur Rehman remain unresolved. Families report being pressured by the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances to accept compensation and close cases without accountability or truth. Over 40 cases remain pending before the courts and are rarely listed, with further delays expected as cases are transferred to the newly established Federal Constitutional Courts. The state has used a range of laws to legitimize arbitrary detention, suppress dissent, and criminalize human rights work, while freedom of expression and assembly have been significantly curtailed. Despite these challenges, DHR has registered over 3,200 cases, including 20 new cases in April 2026 alone, and continues to advocate for ratification of the ICPPED and the adoption of a domestic law criminalizing enforced disappearances.



Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances

A world without *desaparecidos*



afad.asia@protonmail.com



disappeared-asia.org



(+63) 922 727 6877

In **Bangladesh**, following the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led government, the interim government established a Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances, which registered 1,569 cases. Of these, 251 victims remain missing while 1,282 resurfaced after periods of illegal detention, with approximately 96% identified as having known political affiliations. The Commission found that enforced disappearances were sustained by a permissive political and institutional environment, with recurring patterns of coerced confessions, procedural abuses, and strategic case filings that maintained a façade of legality. While the interim government introduced measures aimed at justice and reparation, momentum has slowed following the installation of an elected government in February 2026. Most critically, the newly elected Parliament allowed the Ordinance defining and criminalizing enforced disappearance passed by the interim government to lapse without enactment. Survivors and families continue to live in uncertainty and enduring psychological distress.

In **Nepal**, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons, reconstituted in May 2025, together hold more than 78,000 unresolved complaints, with not a single case adjudicated nearly two decades after the conflict ended. Despite landmark Supreme Court rulings recognizing victims' rights to reparations, prohibition of amnesty, and the state's obligation to act on behalf of victims, successive governments have failed to implement the Court's directives. The political landscape shifted further following the Gen Z protests of September 2025 and the formation of a new government, which removed all political appointments including the commissioners of both transitional justice bodies, opening an uncertain but potentially transformative chapter in Nepal's transitional justice process. Victim groups and civil society are demanding consultative and transparent engagement with the government in this regard.

In the **Philippines**, the Court of Appeals formally recognized both men, Dexter Stewart A. Capuyan and Gene Roz Jamil “Bazoo” C. de Jesus, as victims of enforced disappearance, granted a Writ of Amparo, and cited egregious shortcomings in the Philippine National Police investigation, including the deliberate concealment of a key eyewitness from the petitioners and the Court; the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (UN WGEID) has separately urged the Philippines to establish their fate and whereabouts, bring perpetrators to justice, and ensure reparation for their families.

In **Indian-administered Kashmir**, the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP) has been exonerated, but they carried a documented legacy of more than 8,000 unresolved cases, even as reprisals intensify against defenders who cooperate with UN human rights mechanisms. Former AFAD Chairperson Khurram Parvez also remains detained under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act.

In **Timor-Leste**, the search for the *labarik lakon*, the “stolen children” — continues more than two decades after the close of the Indonesian occupation. The CAVR acknowledged that thousands of children were forcibly removed from their families and taken to Indonesia between 1975 and 1999, to serve as child soldiers, domestic servants, or to be adopted into other



Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances

A world without *desaparecidos*



afad.asia@protonmail.com



disappeared-asia.org



(+63) 922 727 6877

communities. Since 2013, the HAK Association, AJAR, and the Red Cross have been tracing these children, with ten civil-society-led reunions held to date — the most recent bringing Lekiloi home to his family in November 2024 after forty-five years. Every reunion is a public refusal to allow the State to erase a child's family of origin.

Throughout the region, civil society space shrank, and activists were harassed or jailed, yet member organizations pressed on and meticulously documented each case, advocating for victims' families and mobilizing communities despite the dangers. Families of the disappeared continue to wait for truth, justice, and closure. The ICPPED affirms "the right of any victim to know the truth about the circumstances of an enforced disappearance and the fate of the disappeared person," and obligates states to ensure that victims have "the right to obtain reparation and prompt, fair and adequate compensation" for harms suffered. These rights cannot be ignored. The stories of the disappeared must be heard, recorded, and never forgotten, and their families must receive the answers and redress they deserve.

Call to Action:

1. **Ratify and implement the ICPPED:** States that have not yet joined must accede immediately and put the treaty into practice.
2. **Investigate and prosecute perpetrators:** Every official involved in disappearing or abusing detainees must be held accountable in civilian courts. The Convention explicitly requires States to "*hold criminally responsible*" all who commit or order enforced disappearances. This means independent investigations without interference or immunity.
3. **Truth and reparations for families:** Relatives of the disappeared must have full access to all information about each case and receive meaningful remedies. Each victim's family has "the right to know the truth" and "the right to obtain reparation". Governments must ensure searches for the missing, the release of remains if deceased, and compensation, rehabilitation and support for survivors.
4. **Independent investigations:** All investigations into disappearances and related crimes must be impartial and free from state interference.
5. **Protect human rights defenders and end reprisals:** States must guarantee the safety of those who search for, document, and speak on behalf of the disappeared, and cooperate fully with the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances (CED), the WGEID, and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders. As the CED opened its 30th session in March 2026 under the banner "Victims First. Immediate Action," AFAD echoes that call: memory cannot be carried if its carriers are afraid and silenced.

AFAD stands in unwavering solidarity with all families of the disappeared in Asia. We will carry their memories forward as an act of resistance, demanding truth and justice at every step. Memory will continue to be carried as an act of resistance until truth and justice are achieved.



Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances

A world without *desaparecidos*



afad.asia@protonmail.com



disappeared-asia.org



(+63) 922 727 6877

The fight does not end until every family gets the answers they deserve. The state cannot silence the truth by imprisoning the advocates of the disappeared, and so we will not relent until every disappearance is acknowledged and answered.



Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances

A world without *desaparecidos*



afad.asia@protonmail.com



disappeared-asia.org



(+63) 922 727 6877

References

Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD). “Systematic Judicial Persecution and Erosion of Due Process in Pakistan: The Case of Imaan Zainab Mazari-Hazir and Hadi Ali Chattha.” disappearED Asia. disappeared-asia.org/.../652

Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD). “Medical Update Regarding Human Rights Defender Andrie Yunus (Indonesia).” disappearED Asia. disappeared-asia.org/.../656

Odhikar. “Statement on the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, 2025.” disappeared-asia.org/images/2025/Odhikar-IDD-2025-Statement.pdf

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED). ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/.../international-convention-protection-all-persons-enforced

UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances. “Thirtieth Session — Victims First. Immediate Action.” Geneva, 9 March 2026.

UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID). Statement on the second anniversary of the enforced disappearance of Gene Roz Jamil “Bazoo” de Jesus and Dexter Capuyan, Philippines, 28 April 2025. x.com/WGEID/status/1916658630847353223

Mary Lawlor, UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders. Final report to the UN Human Rights Council, 3 March 2026.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). “Legacy of Enforced Disappearances Haunts Sri Lanka.” May 2024. ohchr.org/en/stories/2024/05/legacy-enforced-disappearances-haunts-sri-lanka

Country and Regional Sources

Bangladesh

Odhikar. “Statement on the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, 2025.” (See above.)

India / Indian-administered Kashmir

Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP). apdpkashmir.com

Kashmir Media Service. “Enforced Disappearances: A Global Crime Still Haunting Kashmir.” 17 March 2026. kmsnews.org/.../enforced-disappearances-a-global-crime-still-haunting-kashmir

The Nation. “Over 8,000 Enforced Disappearances, 1.8m Facing Psychological Distress in IIOJK.” 6 March 2026. nation.com.pk/06-Mar-2026/8-000-enforced-disappearances-...

Indonesia



Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances

A world without *desaparecidos*



afad.asia@protonmail.com



disappeared-asia.org



(+63) 922 727 6877

KontraS (Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence). Referenced via the AFAD medical update on Andrie Yunus (above).

Aksi Kamisan. Profile of the weekly silent vigil for victims of past state violence in Indonesia.
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aksi_Kamisan

Inside Indonesia. “The Water That Breaks the Wall of Forgetfulness” (essay on Aksi Kamisan and memory politics).
insideindonesia.org/.../essay-the-water-that-breaks-the-wall-of-forgetfulness

“1997–98 Activists Kidnappings in Indonesia” (overview of the 23 documented abductions, 13 of which remain unresolved).
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1997%E2%80%9C98_activists_kidnappings_in_Indonesia

Asia Justice and Rights (AJAR). “Commemorating the International Week of the Disappeared: A Call for Justice and an End to Enforced Disappearances in Indonesia.”
asia-ajar.org/.../commemorating-the-international-week-of-the-disappeared-...-indonesia

Nepal

Kathmandu Post. “Transitional Justice Regulations Set for Endorsement.” 19 February 2026.
kathmandupost.com/national/2026/02/19/transitional-justice-regulations-set-for-endorsement

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Missing Persons Platform. “Pursuing Truth, Justice, and Redress in Nepal: An Update on the Transitional Justice Process.”
missingpersons.icrc.org/library/pursuing-truth-justice-and-redress-nepal-...

Pakistan / Balochistan

Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD). “Systematic Judicial Persecution and Erosion of Due Process in Pakistan...” (See above.)

Voice for Baloch Missing Persons (VBMP).
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voice_for_Baloch_Missing_Persons

Organiser. “Balochistan Crisis Deepens: 9 Civilians Allegedly Disappear; VBMP Protest Crosses 6,135 Days.” 17 April 2026. organiser.org/2026/04/17/.../balochistan-crisis-deepens

ANI News. “Fresh Allegations of Enforced Disappearances by Pakistani Forces Arise in Balochistan.” 20 April 2026.
aninews.in/.../fresh-allegations-of-enforced-disappearances-by-pakistani-forces-...

Philippines

Amnesty International. “Philippines: Indigenous Rights Activists Reported Missing — Dexter Capuyan and Gene Roz Jamil ‘Bazoo’ de Jesus.” ASA 35/6791/2023.
amnesty.org/en/documents/asa35/6791/2023/en

Katribu Kalipunan ng Katutubong Mamamayan ng Pilipinas. “On 3rd Year of Abduction of Dexter Capuyan and Bazoo de Jesus: Indigenous and Advocate Groups Intensify Call to Surface,



Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances

A world without *desaparecidos*



afad.asia@protonmail.com



disappeared-asia.org



(+63) 922 727 6877

Demand Accountability for Indigenous Rights Defenders.” April 2026.

katribu.net/post/indigenous-advocate-groups-intensify-call-to-surface-...

LiCAS.news. “Philippine Court Declares Missing Indigenous Rights Advocates Victims of Enforced Disappearance.” 14 August 2025.

licas.news/2025/08/14/philippine-court-declares-missing-indigenous-rights-advocates-...

Nordis (Northern Dispatch). “Court Grants Writ of Amparo for Missing Indigenous Rights Activists.” 15 August 2025.

nordis.net/2025/08/15/.../court-grants-writ-of-amparo-for-missing-indigenous-rights-activists

Panaghiusa Philippine Network to Uphold Indigenous Peoples’ Rights. “Surface Dexter Capuyan, Bazoo de Jesus, All Desaparecidos!”

panaghiusa.com/post/surface-dexter-capuyan-bazoo-de-jesus-all-desaparecidos

Human Rights Watch. World Report 2026: Philippines.

hrw.org/world-report/2026/country-chapters/philippines

Republic of Korea (South Korea)

Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Republic of Korea. Official site. jinsil.go.kr (English portal)

Truth and Reconciliation Commission (South Korea). Overview of the Commission’s mandate, cases, and 2020–2026 reconstitutions.

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truth_and_Reconciliation_Commission_\(South_Korea\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truth_and_Reconciliation_Commission_(South_Korea))

The Diplomat. “Transitional Justice in South Korea: A Turn to the Courts?” May 2024.

thediplomat.com/2024/05/transitional-justice-in-south-korea-a-turn-to-the-courts

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). “North Korea: Truth, Justice and Reparations Needed for Victims of Enforced Disappearance and Abduction.” March 2023.

ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/03/north-korea-truth-justice-and-reparations-...

Sri Lanka

Human Rights Watch. “Sri Lanka: Families of ‘Disappeared’ Persecuted.” 29 August 2024.

hrw.org/news/2024/08/29/sri-lanka-families-disappeared-persecuted

International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP). “Sri Lanka.”

icmp.int/the-missing/where-are-the-missing/sri-lanka

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). “Legacy of Enforced Disappearances Haunts Sri Lanka.” (See above.)

Timor-Leste

Asia Justice and Rights (AJAR). “Indonesia–Timor-Leste: Amidst Challenges, the Working Group for Stolen Children Marks Tenth Reunion.”

asia-ajar.org/.../indonesia-timor-leste-...-the-working-group-for-stolen-children-marks-tenth-reunion



Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances

A world without *desaparecidos*



afad.asia@protonmail.com



disappeared-asia.org



(+63) 922 727 6877

Asia Justice and Rights (AJAR). “Reuniting Timor-Leste Children Stolen by Indonesia” (policy paper).

asia-ajar.org/resources/policy-papers/reuniting-timor-leste-children-stolen-by-indonesia

TATOLI Agência Noticiosa de Timor-Leste. “‘Stolen Children’ of East Timor: A Family Reunited After 45 Years.” 31 January 2025.

en.tatoli.tl/2025/01/31/stolen-children-of-east-timor-a-family-reunited-after-45-years