



**32nd Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council
Item 2: Thematic reports by the High Commissioner – General Debate**

**Oral Statement Delivered by Rosanna Ocampo
On behalf of the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)**

Tuesday, 21 June 2016

Mr. President, FORUM-ASIA welcomes the High Commissioner's practical recommendations for the creation and maintenance of a safe and enabling environment for civil society.

We echo the High Commissioner's recommendation to review or repeal legislation that impede free and independent functioning of civil society. Several Asian states have imposed legal restrictions on formation, registration and membership of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with onerous reporting requirements. In addition to legislation directly related to civil society, other laws such as anti-terrorism and national security legislation or criminal provisions on sedition, lèse majesté and blasphemy in many Asian countries have provisions that restrict the work of NGOs.

We are concerned by legal restrictions on access to funding and resources to civil society organisations in many Asian countries. For instance, throughout 2015 the Indian government banned a large number of NGOs from receiving foreign funding alleging non-compliance with the stringent Foreign Contribution Regulation Act. Similar laws exist in other countries including Bangladesh, Singapore, Pakistan, Indonesia, Nepal, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia. We are concerned that such laws are frequently used to intimidate or silence NGOs that criticize the government. We stress that these undue restrictions on access to funding are violations of the right to freedom of association.

We are alarmed at increasing instances of intimidation against civil society actors and human rights defenders. For example, in May this year, three prominent human rights defenders in Thailand faced legal action for criminal defamation and violations of the Computer Crimes Act for a report they published on torture in the Southern part of the country. In Cambodia members of a prominent NGO ADHOC face trumped up charges of corruption and have been jailed as they await trials. In Bangladesh, bloggers, LGBTI rights activists and other political activists continue to face attacks from extremist non-state actors and the state is yet to adequately investigate and prosecute those responsible.

We call on member states to take immediate steps to implement the recommendations in the report and ask the High Commissioner how the Council can follow-up with member states on such implementation.

Thank you.