

SPOTLIGHT ON R2P



Youth Summit on Atrocity Prevention

Executive Summary

The first Youth Summit on Atrocity Prevention was held in Bangkok at the Siam Anantara, Bangkok, Thailand 21- 22 August 2018 and included over 29 youth leaders representing 9 countries from across the region.

The youth leaders received specialist training from academic and civil society leaders in the field of atrocity prevention. This included discussion of how atrocity prevention and R2P are consistent with the values of ASEAN (Dr Noel Morada), how important youth agency is in preventing atrocities and building peace (Dr Sarah Teitt), and how youth leadership can be deployed through civil society programs to effectively raise awareness of atrocity risk factors at the local level (Ms Rahimah Abdulrahmin).

Through group work and discussion, the young leaders developed

a 'Statement of Commitment' on the prevention of atrocity crimes in the Asia Pacific region. The group committed to establishing a 'regional network of youth leaders for atrocity prevention', and called for the appointment of a youth focal point in each country within the region to advocate for atrocity prevention and R2P at the local level.

Session One: Atrocity Prevention in the Asia Pacific

In this session, Noel Morada provided an overview of the Responsibility to Protect and the atrocity prevention agenda. He then examined key opportunities and challenges specific to atrocity prevention in the Asia Pacific region.

After providing a brief history of R2P, including the catalyst for its creation (humanitarian crisis in the 1990s), Morada introduced the room to the

'rice cake analogy'. That is, that norms like R2P do not automatically cascade, but need 'fire from above and below'. He argued that without support and awareness of R2P at the local level, it is very difficult to gain support at the domestic or regional level. He called on the youth leaders to act as domestic champions of R2P and to actively participate in promoting awareness through traditional and social media.

Highlighting the relevance of R2P in Southeast Asia, Dr Morada showed that despite reticence linked to ASEAN's traditional norm of non-interference, R2P is a friend not an enemy of the region. He argued that when you link sovereignty to good governance, human rights protection, and democracy, you see values that are already affirmed by ASEAN, and that R2P enhances the legitimacy of states if they adhere to it.



Abdulrahmin explained how the CERITA program empowers Indonesian youth to facilitate interfaith and intercultural dialogue to address rising intolerance and radicalism in Indonesia through storytelling. She further explained how, in response to warning signals (e.g. hate speech, racism, discrimination) during the Jakarta elections two years ago that challenged the Habibie Centre’s national motto of ‘unity and diversity’, the Centre sought to create dialogue across groups in opposition to each other. Abdulrahmin, informed the youth leaders that the CERITA program has now grown to over 140 duta CERITA ambassadors across Indonesia, with an ambitious program to replicate this across other states in the region.

Session Two: Empowering Young People to Prevent Atrocities and Build Peace

In this session, Sarah Teitt highlighted growing recognition of the important role of young people, and youth agency, in preventing atrocities and building peace.

The session provided an overview of the development of the Youth, Peace and Security’ agenda that was established through UN Security Council Resolution 2250, and highlighted examples of how young people have shown leadership in promoting human rights protection and peacebuilding in the region (e.g. 2014 ASEAN Youth Forum’s ‘Yangon Youth Declaration’). Teitt emphasised that in contrast to the stereotypes of youths as ‘perpetrators in waiting’ or ‘helpless victims’, they are actually agents of effective political and social action. She showed how the youth of the Asia Pacific region—some 717 million individuals are an untapped resource for positive social change. She urged the youth leaders to look at examples of youth leadership in global spaces as inspiration, and to explore ways in which they can promote atrocity prevention in the Asia Pacific region.

Session Three: Recognising Youth Leadership and Capacity in Atrocity Prevention in the Asia Pacific

In this session, Ima Abdulrahmin introduced the Habibie Centre project on ‘Community Empowerment in Raising Inclusivity and Trust through Technology Application’ (CERITA). This was shown as an example of a program that is effectively raising awareness of atrocity risk factors at the local level. The CERITA program aims to prevent discrimination and, ultimately, mass atrocity.

Session Four: Group Discussion on Challenges to Empowering Youth in Atrocity Prevention in the Asia Pacific

Youth leaders divided into three groups to consider the role of the region’s youth in preventing atrocity crimes.

The first group considered what is most important, or needed, for strengthening atrocity prevention in the Asia Pacific Region. The discussions identified a number of answers, but the foremost was the need for greater education on atroc-





ity prevention and the issues that feed into it. This included awareness of good governance and the rule of law. Particularly at the state level, the group considered that legislation on human rights needs to be implemented, courts must be independent, local and state levels of government must be linked with higher levels of regional and international governance, the function of democracy must be improved, and there must be greater accountability at all levels of government. They also saw creating people-to-people dialogue with broad community participation as crucial.

The second group considered in what ways young people already contribute to atrocity prevention in the Asia Pacific region. The group identified existing youth networks that could be leveraged towards promoting atrocity prevention, such as the ASEAN Youth Forum, ASEAN University Network, AIESEC, and PACE48. They also saw opportunities for leadership training and networking afforded to youth leaders as crucial to assisting other young people to take the lead, and identified the need for more opportunities with a more diverse participation group (i.e. not always the same youth leaders, but bringing in people from different backgrounds to get broader support). They identified that increased support is needed from NGOs and universities to facilitate greater engagement by young people.

The third group considered the challenges and barriers faced by Asia Pacific youth when engaging in efforts to prevent atrocities, to counter violence, or to promote tolerance and inclusion. The list was vast, and included: age discrimination; lack of freedom of expression (both personally and within the media); group division (e.g. along religious lines); gender inequality and discrimination; economic incentives to get a good job, and the related family pressures; cultural and hierarchical structures, and; resources. This group went on to consider possible solutions to the challenges faced by Asia Pacific youth, such as setting up protection mechanisms, implementing youth dialogues or forums to break down barriers, increasing the number of youth leaders, and increasing the diversity amongst youth leaders.

Session Five: Strengthening Youth Leadership and Capacity in Atrocity Prevention

During this session, youth leaders devised their statement of commitment. This was the major output of the Bangkok Youth Summit on Atrocity Prevention, and outlines the commitment the group has made to its principles and future objectives, as a group. The text of the commitment is as follows overpage:



STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT BY THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE 2018 YOUTH SUMMIT ON THE PREVENTION OF ATROCITY CRIMES IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION

Determined to build a future for our region that is free from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity based on the principles of international solidarity, gender equality, non-discrimination, inclusivity, and respect for diversity;

Affirming the need to fully implement international human rights and international humanitarian law, the Responsibility to Protect as endorsed at the 2005 World Summit, and UN Security Council Resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018) on Youth, Peace, and Security that recognise youth as partners of peace and agents of prevention, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution;

Urging all stakeholders to support effective preventive action, including more efficient responses to emerging crises and ongoing atrocity situations, and the establishment of mechanisms for early warning and early response at the local, national, and regional level;

Recognising the need for greater education, awareness raising, and capacity building about human rights protection, risk assessment frameworks for atrocity crimes, cross-cultural and interfaith dialogue, preventive diplomacy, and local peacebuilding;

Recognising also the importance of investing in youth education and employment opportunities, and supporting young people in peer learning and cooperation to realize our shared vision of a peaceful region free from atrocity crimes;

Bearing in mind the need for meaningful and sustainable youth participation in atrocity prevention in the Asia Pacific;

We are committed to:

1. Supporting the implementation of the Responsibility to Protect in the Asia Pacific region.
2. Establishing youth focal points in each country in the Asia Pacific to advocate specifically for the protection of young people and their full participation in atrocity prevention, including through:
 - the dissemination of information and advice to relevant government bodies;
 - the development of innovative ways to engage with parliamentarians and other national stakeholders;
 - raising awareness about R2P;
 - advocating for accountability and an end to impunity for atrocity crimes; and
 - surveying, within the next 12 months, national capacities and networks that already exist to support atrocity prevention, and reporting our findings to the group.
3. Establishing a regional network of youth leaders for R2P. Its activities will include:
 - Convening an annual meeting;
 - Establishing social media platforms;
 - Exchanging and disseminating information about atrocity prevention;
 - Establishing partnerships with relevant organizations, including the Asia Pacific Centre for R2P, the Asia Pacific Partnership for Atrocity Prevention, and the Global Centre for R2P;
 - Identifying and engaging with other mechanisms and groups to advance our goals, including the ASEAN Youth Forum and ASEAN People Forum;
 - Providing mutual support;
 - Empowering youth to participate in atrocity prevention!

Delegates to the Youth Summit nominated representatives to present their Statement of Commitment to the High-Level meeting 'Strengthening Regional Cooperation for Atrocity Prevention' in Bangkok on 23 August. With the support of the Asia Pacific Partnership for Atrocity Prevention, the youth delegates intend to implement key aspects of their Statement of Commitment over the next year, including as a first priority establishing a regional youth network for atrocity prevention and nominating a youth focal point in each country.



The APR2P Centre acknowledges work undertaken drafting this document by meeting rapporteur University of Queensland RHD Student Ms Josie Hornung.



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