



Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances

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BRING THEM HOME – No more disappearances!

A Solidarity Message by the Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD) for the Families of the Disappeared (FOD) in Sri Lanka

The Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD) stands in solidarity with Families of the Disappeared (FOD) in Sri Lanka, a nation scarred by the brutal history of enforced disappearances.

On October 27th, 1989, the tragic incident at the Free Trade Zone (FTZ) marked a dark chapter in Sri Lanka's history. Ranjith and his legal representative Lionel attended a disciplinary inquiry at the factory at four in the afternoon. When Ranjith and Lionel were leaving the factory's personnel manageress called the Katunayake police saying "our work is completed now and they are leaving". Herath Mudiyansele Ranjith, a courageous FTZ worker, and his legal representative, Lionel, were abducted, shot dead, and their bodies incinerated, leaving the community in shock and despair.

Ranjith and Lionel's enforced disappearance and eventual death spurred FOD's unwavering commitment to seek justice for the countless victims of enforced disappearances in Sri Lanka. Following this tragic incident in 1989, FOD collaborated with the "Mothers Front" and "Organization of the Parents and the Family Members of the Disappeared" (OPFMD) to advocate against enforced disappearances. The annual commemoration, beginning in 1991 with 16 participants, evolved into a significant event uniting diverse groups amid heavy police intervention in 1992.

In 2000, the unveiling of "The Monument for the Disappeared," created by Dr. Chandraguptha Thenuwara with the support of Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) and the May 18th Foundation, marked a pivotal moment. The "Wall of Tears," showcasing nearly 800 photographs of the disappeared, further amplified their cause.

These malevolent actions have had a devastating impact on the lives of the people, leaving behind a trail of shattered families, shattered hopes, and an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty. The women and young people left behind grapple with the profound emotional and socioeconomic repercussions, even while an oppressive regime tightens its grip, further eroding the already constrained civic space in Sri Lanka.

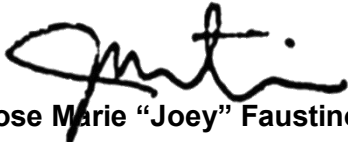
In the face of this unrelenting onslaught, FOD has emerged as a beacon of hope and resilience. By mobilizing victim families, providing unwavering care and support, and tirelessly raising awareness about the plight of the disappeared, FOD has become a pillar of strength for those fighting for truth and justice.

With a shift towards greater involvement of affected family members over the years, including Tamil mothers from the North in 2012 and those from the East in 2016, FOD has remained steadfast in its commitment to end enforced disappearances in Sri Lanka. Despite challenges, including unfulfilled government promises, inadequate compensation, and the inefficiency of institutions like the Office for Missing Persons (OMP) which failed to distribute allocated funds to the families, FOD continues to demand truth, justice, and reparation.

As FOD prepares for its 33rd commemoration with the theme of **BRING THEM HOME – No more disappearances**, their campaign gains momentum, symbolized by 33 mothers publicly wearing lockets bearing photographs of their disappeared loved ones. FOD's persistence in demanding an end to enforced disappearances, recognizing the cyclical nature of these atrocities in Sri Lanka's history, serves as a guiding light in the fight for human rights. FOD continues to work with international organizations like AFAD, where FOD is a Member Organization, to raise international awareness on the enforced disappearance and its impact on the lives of Sri Lankans.

AFAD stands in unwavering solidarity with FOD in their relentless pursuit of truth, justice, and reparations for the victims of enforced disappearances in Sri Lanka. We urge the global community to join us in amplifying FOD's courageous voices and advocating for an immediate end to enforced disappearances in Sri Lanka. It is imperative that we mobilize international support to bolster FOD's advocacy efforts, holding perpetrators accountable and putting an end to the prevailing culture of impunity that perpetuates these heinous acts. Let us come together in unity and support FOD's vital mission to bring an end to enforced disappearances, ensuring the protection, not persecution, of human rights defenders.

Stop Enforced Disappearances. Protection, not persecution, of human rights defenders.



Jose Marie "Joey" Faustino
Secretary-General

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