



Statement of the Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD) on the International Day of Criminal Justice

On this year's International Day of Criminal Justice, the Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD) stands in solidarity with the families of victims of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances in the Philippines and across Asia who continue to fight for truth, justice, and accountability.

We commend the courage of the surviving families and witnesses who have testified before the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the case against former Philippine President Rodrigo Roa Duterte. Their testimonies are a powerful act of resistance, especially amid persistent disinformation campaigns that aim to distort the truth and malign the pursuit of justice. Some of the victims of Duterte's bloody "war on drugs" were forcibly disappeared leaving behind families haunted by silence and absence.

The continued attempts of the Duterte camp to portray the former President as the victim—even while under ICC custody—are a stark example of the strategies used by authoritarian figures to evade accountability. These narratives, amplified by coordinated networks of disinformation, attempt to delegitimize international justice mechanisms and vilify the families of victims and human rights defenders.

This phenomenon is not isolated to the Philippines. Across Asia, we are witnessing an alarming trend of state-led disinformation campaigns that seek to erase or deny the atrocities committed against victims of enforced disappearances and other gross human rights violations. From South Asia to Southeast Asia, victim families are harassed, discredited, or accused of destabilizing the state simply for demanding the truth about their loved ones. Disinformation is being weaponized to deepen impunity, discredit international institutions, and divide public opinion.

AFAD renews its call to all states in Asia to respect international human rights obligations, support the ICC, and end the practice of enforced disappearance. We call on civil society, the media, and the international community to remain vigilant and counter disinformation with truth-telling, solidarity, and support for the victims.

The path to justice may be long and fraught with resistance, but the unwavering courage of victims and their families will always light the way. On this day, we recommit to building a future where the truth is not buried, and justice is not denied. There is no justice without truth, and no truth without justice.

#JusticeForTheDisappeared
#StopDisinformation
#InternationalJusticeDay