

# Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition

## October 2010 Update

### ACTIVITIES

1. *Seminar on 'Traditional Values and Human Rights, 4 October, Geneva, Switzerland*

Organised by the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights pursuant to the Human Rights Council resolution on traditional values introduced by the Russian Federation last year, the seminar was intended to discuss how traditional values can contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights. There were a series of panel discussions with experts, primarily from the academe, with no civil society speakers among the panelists. Members of the Coalition including AI, Forum Asia, ISHR, and WLUML delivered statement from the floor to affirm the stance against invoking culture and tradition to justify violations against women's rights at the same time caution against the essentialisation of traditional values and practices as harmful to women. The presence of critical civil society groups in the meeting was successful in derailing an unproblematised acceptance of traditional values though it seems that the Russian Federation might introduce another resolution next year.

2. *First International Conference on Human Rights in Southeast Asia, 14 – 15 October, Bangkok Thailand*

The conference brought civil society groups and a large contingent from the academe to human rights issues in Southeast Asia. Presentations were made regarding possible strategies to pressure the new ASEAN Inter-governmental Human Rights Commission (AIHCR) to fulfil its mandate not only to promote, but also to protect human rights given the prevailing principle of 'non-intervention among ASEAN states and the policy of the Commission not take funds from donors for any protection (only promotion) activities. The conference also included a plenary on sexuality and human rights to showcase current initiatives to advance LGBTI and sexual rights in the region. While there have been advances particularly in recognising the human rights of LGBTI people as they intersect with the fight against HIV/AIDs, LGBTI groups still have to counter discrimination in public arenas such as in political elections (Philippines) or the attacks against them by fundamentalist groups (Indonesia). The Coordinator presented a paper "Women Human Rights Defenders: Gendered Challenges in Defending Human Rights in Southeast Asia". <http://www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org/resources.php>

3. *Working Group Meeting on the Urgent Appeals Mechanism, 28 – 29 October, Geneva, Switzerland*

Members of the WHRD IC Working Group on the Urgent Appeals Mechanism met in Geneva on 28 – 29 October. The meeting discussed the finalisation of the research led by AWID to assess the current responses to urgent appeals. Based on the research, a list of resources for women human rights defenders at risk will be made available to the public. A policy brief will also be developed to build on the analysis of the situation of women human rights defenders developed when the campaign started in 2005; highlight the limitations and challenges of responding to urgent appeals from a gender perspective; and present principles for gender-sensitive responses to guide organisations. A Donors' brief based on the research will also be drafted. For more information, contact the Research Consultant on [macubarca@yahoo.com](mailto:macubarca@yahoo.com)

## *Urgent Appeals*

The Coalition circulated and/or responded to the following cases for October:

Release of Morong 43, a group of imprisoned women health workers from Morong Bataan, Philippines. [http://www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org/pdf/APWLD\\_Statement\\_Demanding\\_the\\_Release\\_of\\_the\\_Morong\\_43.pdf](http://www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org/pdf/APWLD_Statement_Demanding_the_Release_of_the_Morong_43.pdf)

Arrests of WLUML members Dr. Isatou Touray and Ms. Amie Bojang-Sissoho on Monday, 11 October 2010 in the Gambia. [http://www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org/gambia\\_whrd\\_ic\\_shocked.php](http://www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org/gambia_whrd_ic_shocked.php) The women defenders have been released on bail on 21 October.

## SECRETARIAT

### *New WHRD IC Member: Isis International Manila*

The Executive Committee approved the membership of Isis International Manila, which has hosted the Coalition since it was set up in 2008. Isis is the 23rd member of the Coalition to date.

### *Aisha Saheed, Associate Coordinator, leaves WLUML*

Aisha, WLUML Associate Coordinator and member of the WHRD IC Executive Committee will leave WLUML by 5 November. The Secretariat is consulting with WLUML regarding the designation of its representative to the Coalition to replace Aisha.

## UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

• 4 - 6 November: ISHR Consultation with Women Human Rights Defenders in Africa, Banjul, Gambia
• 17 - 26 Nov: Working Group on Arbitrary Detention – 59 <sup>th</sup> session, Geneva, Switzerland
• 22 Nov - 3 Dec: UPR Working Group – 9 <sup>th</sup> session, Geneva, Switzerland
• <b>29 Nov: Women Human Rights Defenders Day</b>
• 29 - 30 Nov: APWLD Consultation with UN Special Rapporteur on VAW, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
• 2- 4 Dec: Forum Asia Asian Consultation on Human Rights Defenders, Manila, Philippines
• <b>5 – 6 Dec: WHRD IC Working Group meetings, Manila, Philippines</b>

See full calendar at:

[http://www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org/pdf/whrd\\_ic\\_calendar2010.pdf](http://www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org/pdf/whrd_ic_calendar2010.pdf)

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26 October 2010.

Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition

Secretariat

[www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org](http://www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org)