Conference Declaration on Freedom of Religion or Belief in Southeast Asia
1 October 2015, Bangkok, Thailand

We, the undersigned participants to the Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief in Southeast Asia, co-organized by the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) and Boat People SOS (BPSOS), held on 30 September to 1 October 2015 in Bangkok, Thailand hereby declare:

Whereas the prospect of greater economic, social and cultural integration among the States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) provides an important opportunity for acknowledging existing and emerging diversity of religions or beliefs in the region;

Whereas violations of freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief [henceforth 'freedom of religion or belief'] continue to occur around the world and in Southeast Asia, perpetrated by both States and non-state actors;

Whereas Southeast Asian national and regional institutions are beginning to recognize the prevalence of violations of the freedom of religion or belief in the region;

Whereas the freedom of religion or belief is a universal, established, and non-derogable human right, enshrined in international treaties at the United Nations, regional instruments, and domestic constitutions;

Whereas States are accountable under international human rights law to respect, protect and promote freedom of religion or belief in conjunction with all other human rights;

The signatories REAFFIRM:

Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which declares

“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”

Freedom of religion or belief is an inalienable, non-derogable human right, encompassing the right to hold or not to hold any faith or belief, to change belief, and to be free from coercion and to manifest religion or belief.

For freedom of religion or belief to be fully enjoyed, other human rights must also be respected, particularly the principle of non-discrimination and freedoms of expression, assembly, association, movement, and the right to education.

The signatories COMMIT to:

Defend and promote freedom of religion or belief as a universal, inalienable and non-derogable human right, as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in
international law and declarations, and in the work of national, regional, and global institutions.

Defend and promote freedom of religion or belief for all persons, as individuals and in community with others, through their work and respective institutions by sharing information and mobilizing effective responses.

Work toward the non-discriminatory realization of freedom of religion or belief in recognition of multiple and intersectional discriminations and vulnerabilities, including, among other grounds, on grounds of ethnicity, indigenous identity, gender, sexual orientation, citizenship, and disabilities.

Enhance global and regional cooperation by working across geographical, national, racial, ethnic, political and religious boundaries.

Advocate for accountability and remedies for individuals and communities suffering from violence, persecution, discrimination, harassment, marginalization or other abuses of human rights because of their religion or belief.

Express and act in solidarity with individuals and communities suffering from violence, persecution, discrimination, harassment, marginalization or other abuses of human rights because of their religion or belief.

*The text above was based on the 2014 Charter for Freedom of Religion or Belief and the 2015 New York Resolution for Freedom of Religion or Belief of the International Panel of Parliaments for Freedom of Religion or Belief (IPPFoRB)*

**Individuals**

Andrea Giorgetta  
Andrew Khoo  
Ashin Zayaditha  
Aviva Nababan  
Braema Mathi  
Chew Chuan Yang  
Daniel Lising  
Elisabeth  
Emilia Renita Az  
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John Liu  
John Saw Yaw Han  
Lah Eh Doh  
Nur Syamimi binti Amran  
Prabindra Shakya  
Tan Kong Beng  
Vien Tanjung  

**Organizations**

Abdurrahman Wahid Centre for Inter-Faith Dialogue and Peace, University of Indonesia  
Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma (ALTSEAN-Burma)  
An Dan Dai Dao Buddhist Sect  
Asia Pacific Resource and Research Center for Women (ARROW)  
CamASEAN Youth's Future (CamASEAN)  
Chin Human Rights Organization  
Christian Solidarity Worldwide  
IMPARSIAL  
Institute for Interfaith Dialogue in Indonesia (INTERFIDEI), Jogjakarta-Indonesia
Komuniti Muslim Universal  
LBH Jakarta (Jakarta Legal Aid Institute)  
Metropolitan Community Church (MCC)  
Muslims for Progressive Values  
Organization of Ahlulbayt for Social Support and Education  
PAHRA  
Pakigdait Inc.  
PATANI  
People’s Empowerment Foundation  
Popular Bloc of Cao Dai Religion  
Pusat KOMAS  
Smile Education and Development Foundation  
Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM)  
The Seagull: Human Rights, Peace and Development  
Veto! Human Rights Defenders Network  
Vietnam Committee on Human Rights  
Women Gender Institute  

Post-conference endorsements:

**Individuals**
Ho Yock Lin  
Wan Kum Keong  

**Organizations**
Aliran  
Committee for Religious Freedom in Vietnam  
Komnas Perempuan (National Commission of Anti-Violence Against Women)  
Montagnard Human Rights Organization (MHRO)  
PT Foundation