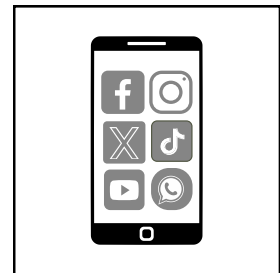
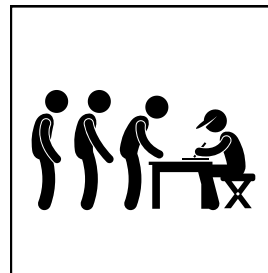




9TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

# SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE IN ASIA

STORIES OF RESISTANCE AND PUSHBACK

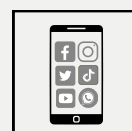
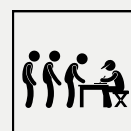


21 – 23 AUGUST 2024  
BANGKOK, THAILAND

## CONFERENCE BOOKLET

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# ABOUT ASIA CENTRE

Asia Centre is a Civil Society Research Institute  
in Special Consultative Status with the  
United Nations Economic and Social Council  
(UN ECOSOC)

## What We Do



Research



Training



Advocacy



Media

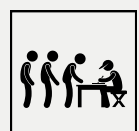


01

9TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

**SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE IN ASIA**  
STORIES OF RESISTANCE AND PUSHBACK

21 - 23 AUGUST 2024 - BANGKOK, THAILAND



# CONFERENCE VENUE

The conference will be held at **Pullman Bangkok Hotel G**: 188 Silom Road, Bangrak, Bangkok 10500.

Tel: (+66)2-352-4000

ที่อยู่: โรงแรมพูลแมน กรุงเทพฯ จี, 188 ถนนสีลม, เขตบางรัก, กรุงเทพฯ 10500  
เบอร์: 02-352-4000



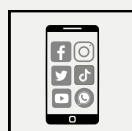
## Direction to Conference Venue

By Train: The hotel is conveniently located in the heart of the city, with easy access to Bangkok's BTS Skytrain (Chong Nonsi station) and the underground MRT rail system (Silom station).

By Car: For those travelling by car, car park spaces are available at the hotel and can be validated as free parking for conference participants.

For more information:

<https://www.pullmanbangkokhotelg.com/official-site/location/>





# GENERAL INFORMATION

## Registration Desk

On Day 0 (21 August), participants can pick up their conference documents from 5:30 PM to 6 PM at the registration desk on Floor 38.

On Days 1 (22 August) and 2 (23 August), registration will be available from 8:30 AM to 9 AM on Floor 36.

## Identification Name Tags

Participants are asked to use their name tags throughout the conference.

The name tag gives access to the Welcome Reception, the plenary and breakout panels, the coffee breaks and the closing dinner with partners.

Participants **are asked to return the name tags** after the end of the conference to the registration counter.

## Welcome Reception & Closing Dinner

A Welcome Reception will be held on Wednesday the 21st from 7:35 PM to 9 PM at Ballroom 38, 38th floor.

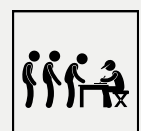
A Happy Hour will be held on Friday the 23rd from 5 PM to 6.30 PM at TIVA, 2nd Floor.

## Catering

Participants will be provided with lunch on the second and third days (22-23 August).

Drinks and snacks will be provided during coffee breaks on the second and third days (22-23 August).

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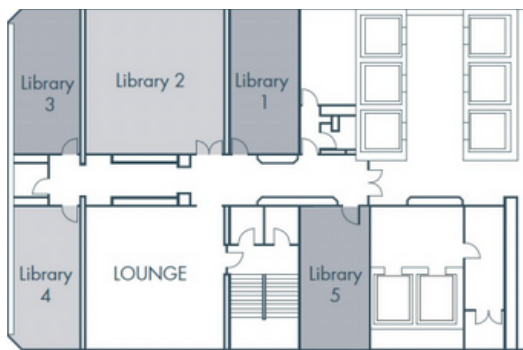


# GENERAL INFORMATION

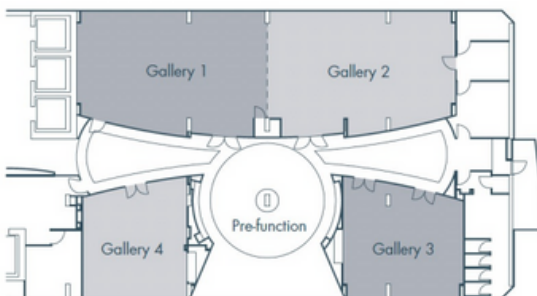
## Conference Rooms

- **Ballroom 38, 38/F:** Panel 1
- **Galleries 1-4, 36/F:** Panels 2-16
- **Tiva, 2/F:** Lunch and Happy Hour

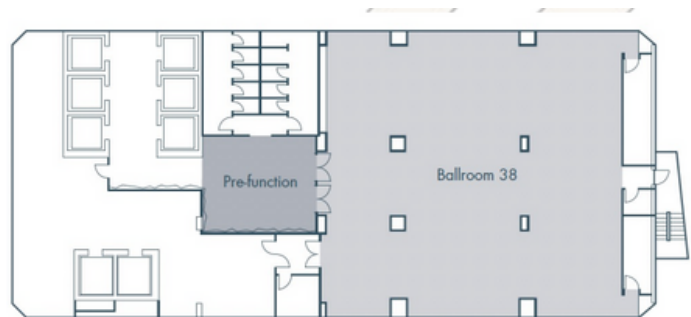
### The Library



### The Galleries



### The Ballroom



## Contact Information

For more information about the 9th conference:

<https://asiacentre.org/event/9th-international-conference-shrinking-civic-space-in-asia-stories-of-resistance-and-pushback/>

For any inquiries, please send an email to the organizing committee at [lina@asiacentre.org](mailto:lina@asiacentre.org)



# PROGRAMME

## Day 0: 21 Aug / Wed

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5:30 PM     *Registration at Ballroom 38, 38/F*

6 PM        **Opening Remarks**

6:05 PM     **Panel 1: Beyond Borders and Ethnicities: Stand with Democracy**

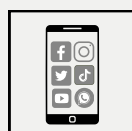
By Radio Taiwan International (Rti)

*Venue: Ballroom 38, 38/F*

Group Photo

7:35 PM     **Welcome Reception**

*Venue: Ballroom 38, 38/F*

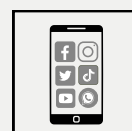
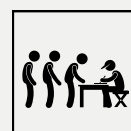


# PROGRAMME

## Day 1: 22 Aug / Thur

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- 8:30 AM      *Registration at Gallery 1-2, 36/F*
- 9 AM          **Welcome Remarks and Group Photo**
- 9:25 AM      **MoU Signing Ceremony between the Asia Centre and the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD)**
- 9:30 AM      **Panel 2 – Best Practices in Collaborative Governance of Public Emergencies**  
by International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL)  
*Venue: Gallery 1-2, 36/F*
- 11 AM        **Coffee Break**
- 11:30 AM     **Panel 3 – Shrinking Civic Space: Lessons from Southeast Asia**  
by International Development Research Centre (IDRC)  
*Venue: Gallery 1-2, 36/F*
- 1 PM          **Lunch** at Tiva, 2/F
- 2 PM          **Panel 4 – Criminalization and Prosecution of Changemakers**  
by Council of Asian Liberals & Democrats (CALD)  
*Venue: Gallery 3, 36/F*
- Panel 5 - Political Parties and Civil Society: Exploring How Opposition Parties Bolster or Undermine the Civic Space**  
by International Republican Institute (IRI)  
*Venue: Gallery 4, 36/F*
- Panel 6 - National Government-Run Relief Funds and Other Barriers to CSO Resourcing**  
by International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL)  
*Venue: Gallery 1-2, 36/F*



# PROGRAMME

## Day 1: 22 Aug / Thur

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3:30 PM

### **Refreshments**

*Venue: Foyer*

4:00 PM

### **Panel 7 – Beyond Borders and Ethnicities: Amplify the Voice and Diversity**

by Radio Taiwan International

*Venue: Gallery 1-2, 36/F*

### **Panel 8 – Fake News and Democracy**

by La Trobe University

*Venue: Gallery 3, 36/F*

### **Workshop on Digital Security Training**

by Asia Centre & Google

*Venue: Gallery 4, 36/F*

5:30 PM

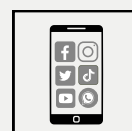
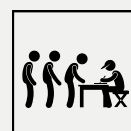
### **End of Day 1**

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9TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

**SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE IN ASIA**  
STORIES OF RESISTANCE AND PUSHBACK

21 – 23 AUGUST 2024 - BANGKOK, THAILAND



# PROGRAMME

## Day 2: 23 Aug / Fri

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8:30 AM *Registration at Gallery 1-2, 36/F*

9 AM **Panel 9 - The Vanguard of Change: Challenges and Opportunities for Indigenous Youth and Women**

by International IDEA

*Venue: Gallery 1-2, 36/F*

10:30 AM **Refreshments**

*Venue: Foyer*

11 AM **Panel 10 - Strategies for Defending and Expanding Civic Space: Tactics for Building Positive Relationships and Decisionmakers**

by Counterpart International

*Venue: Gallery 1-2, 36/F*

12:30 PM **Lunch** at Tiva, 2/F

1:30 PM **Panel 11 - Information Integrity and Digital Public Sphere in Asia**

by The International Development Research Centre (IDRC)

*Venue: Gallery 1-2, 36/F*

**Panel 12 - For Free Civil Activities in Today's World Where Social Networking Has Become the Norm: A Case Study on Young Generation in Japan**

by Pacifica GK

*Venue: Gallery 3, 36/F*

**Panel 13 - An Antidote to Democratic Decline? Stories of Deliberative Democracy from Asia**

by The Asia Foundation

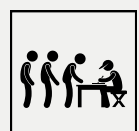
*Venue: Gallery 4, 36/F*

08

9TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

**SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE IN ASIA**  
STORIES OF RESISTANCE AND PUSHBACK

21 - 23 AUGUST 2024 - BANGKOK, THAILAND



# PROGRAMME

## Day 2: 23 Aug / Fri

---

3:00 PM **Refreshments**

*Venue: Foyer*

3:30 PM **Panel 14 – Legacies of COVID19 Governance and Impacts on Civic Freedoms**

by International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL)

*Venue: Gallery 1-2, 36/F*

**Panel 15 – Navigating and Reclaiming Civic Spaces: Strategies, Support, and Case Studies from Asia and Beyond**

by Asia Centre

*Venue: Gallery 3, 36/F*

**Panel 16 – A New Dawn for Bangladesh: Success of the Student Movement**

by University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB)

*Venue: Gallery 4, 36/F*

5:00 PM **Happy Hour** at Tiva, 2/F

6:30 PM **End of Day 2**



# PROGRAMME

## PANEL 1: BEYOND BORDERS AND ETHNICITIES – STAND WITH DEMOCRACY

Hosted by: Radio Taiwan International

**Date:** 21 August 2024

**Time:** 6 PM – 7:30 PM

**Venue:** Ballroom 38, 38/F

### Abstract

This panel will delve into key issues such as multiculturalism, cross-cultural communication, the defence of democracy and freedom, democratic backsliding, and Taiwan's role in the current global landscape.

Taiwan has recently become a focal point of international media attention, positioned at the forefront of geopolitical tensions. The global community recognises Taiwan's vital role in the technology supply chain and increasingly values its longstanding contributions to public health, the defence of freedom and democracy, and its resistance to cognitive warfare.

Rti, a 96-year-old public media organisation, has evolved alongside Taiwan's democratisation. It has grown into an international public broadcaster, sharing Taiwan's stories in 20 languages and serving the interests of migrant workers and immigrants. Rti's core missions are to safeguard freedom of speech and to amplify diverse voices from the island to a global audience. Taiwan's democratic environment not only enables Rti to fulfil these missions but also fosters a diversity of voices across Asia.

In the "Beyond Borders and Ethnicities" panel, representatives from various ethnic groups in Taiwan will share their stories and discuss how they pursue inclusion and mutual prosperity on Taiwanese soil. Taiwan's democratic system is crucial not only for its citizens but also for protecting and expanding civic space across Asia.

### Guiding Questions

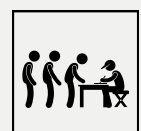
- All speakers will begin with 5-7 minute introductory remarks about how ethnicity and borders impact their country and their immediate neighbours or region.
- In your jurisdiction, to what extent has the media exacerbated these divisions on issues concerning ethnicity and borders?
- Individual Country Questions:
  - Taiwan: Do you think Taiwan invests too much time and money in cultivating Western support at the expense of neglecting or under-emphasising countries and communities closer to the Asia-Pacific region?
  - Ukraine: In the context of the Ukraine-Russia conflict, how is Ukraine addressing the complexities of integrating and supporting the long-standing Russian community within its borders?
  - India: Provide us an update on political developments in Bangladesh and the attacks on the minority Hindu community and India's response.
  - (All) Focusing on the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, what are the policies of your respective countries in approaching the Gaza conflict?

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9TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

**SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE IN ASIA**  
STORIES OF RESISTANCE AND PUSHBACK

21 – 23 AUGUST 2024 - BANGKOK, THAILAND





# PANEL DETAILS

## PANEL 1: BEYOND BORDERS AND ETHNICITIES – STAND WITH DEMOCRACY



Kacey Wong  
Visual Artist

Kacey Wong's artwork explores the relationship between people, society, politics, and life. Due to ongoing oppression in the entertainment and art communities in Hong Kong, he decided to relocate to Taiwan. As a frontline defender of anti-authoritarianism in art and literature, Taiwan has attracted many like-minded Hong Kong artists and cultural talents, thereby strengthening the anti-authoritarian power of art and literature. Kacey is dedicated to protecting freedom of speech and democracy. He views Taiwan as the last line of defence for free speech among Chinese-speaking people and is actively engaged in public and social affairs in Taiwan, using art to champion freedom and democracy. His efforts have not only had a profound impact on the art community but have also injected new energy and perspectives into Taiwan's social movements.



Isis M. Lee  
Radio Taiwan International

Isis M. Lee joined Rti in 2022 and currently oversees the organisation's international programming, global strategies, and training development. She holds an MA in Heritage Management from the University of Birmingham in the UK and has experience working in both government and non-governmental organisations in Taiwan. Her expertise lies in cultural management, international exchange, and related policy research. She previously served as Director of the Ministry of Culture's Global Outreach Office and has worked with organisations such as the Taiwan Association of Cultural Policy Studies and Taipei Artist Village.



Oleksandr Shyn  
Radio Taiwan International

Oleksandr joined Rti in 2022 and has since dedicated himself to establishing Rti's Ukrainian Service and promoting Taiwan-Ukraine relations. During the Russo-Ukrainian War, he maintained close contact with Ukraine and offered solidarity and support through Rti's Ukrainian Service. His efforts have facilitated cultural exchanges between Taiwan and Ukraine, serving as an important bridge between the two nations. His work not only amplified Ukraine's voice internationally but also promoted multicultural identity. Ukrainian immigrants are spread across Asia, with Taiwan being one of only two countries in East Asia providing Ukrainian broadcasting services. Despite limited resources, Olek, in collaboration with Rti, has been committed to connecting with international democratic organisations and establishing networks between Taiwan and Ukraine.



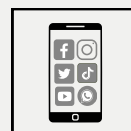
Dr. Niranjana Sahoo  
Observer Research Foundation

Dr Niranjana Sahoo is a senior fellow at ORF's Governance and Politics Initiative. With extensive expertise in governance and public policy, he leads studies and programmes on democracy, human rights, federalism, electoral reforms (particularly issues related to political funding), and cross-cutting issues of exclusion, insurgencies, affirmative action, and inclusion. A recipient of the Asia Fellowship (2009) and a former Sir Ratan Tata Fellow, he currently serves as the South Asia member for the Carnegie Rising Democracies Network, where he debates and writes on democracy, foreign policy, human rights, and related issues. Dr Sahoo has authored two books: Politics of Power Sector Reforms in India (Pentagon Press, 2007) and Reservation Policy and its Implementation across Domains in India: An Analytical Review (Academic Foundation, 2009). His third book, Exclusion and Insurgencies in India, is forthcoming. His latest co-authored monograph, Funding India's Democracy, will be published soon. He regularly contributes to academic and current affairs journals, newspapers, think tanks, and blogs, and features on television programmes related to his areas of expertise.



Dr. James Gomez  
(Moderator)  
Asia Centre

Dr. Gomez oversees Asia Centre operations and leads the partnerships for the Centre's activities in the region. Dr Gomez brings to Asia Centre over 30 years of international and regional experiences in leadership roles at universities, think tanks, inter-governmental agencies and non-governmental organisations. He serves as an international expert on advisory boards of government agencies, intergovernmental organisations, international NGOs and universities. Dr Gomez holds a PhD (Monash University, Australia), MA (University of Essex, United Kingdom), and BSc. (Hons.) (National University of Singapore).



## PANEL 2: BEST PRACTICES IN COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE OF PUBLIC EMERGENCIES

Hosted by: International Center for the Not-for-Profit Law

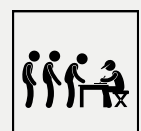
**Date:** 22 August 2024  
**Time:** 9:30 AM - 11 AM  
**Venue:** Gallery 1-2, 36/F

### Abstract

During the pandemic, restrictions on civic freedoms became widespread as many governments fast-tracked emergency legislation and adopted securitised approaches to public health. These measures often involved criminal penalties and the use of excessive force against peaceful activities such as gatherings, criticism of government responses, or protests. Such heavy-handed tactics led to a narrowing of civic space and, in many cases, ineffective public health outcomes.

However, some governments took a different approach. South Korea, Taiwan, New Zealand, and Japan generally sought to protect democratic rights, work collaboratively with civil society, and ensure oversight of emergency measures during the COVID-19 era. While not without flaws, these examples stand out not only in the Asia-Pacific but globally, for their rights-respecting, collaborative, and effective approach to emergency governance.

In addition to tracking negative emergency governance approaches, ICNL conducted studies on each of these 'best practice jurisdictions' to explore the nuances of their collaborative strategies. Study authors and expert panellists will present their research findings from each jurisdiction, highlighting good practices and areas for improvement. This interactive discussion is designed to advance the discourse and enhance emergency governance and civil society collaboration in the future.



# PANEL DETAILS

## PANEL 2: BEST PRACTICES IN COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE OF PUBLIC EMERGENCIES



Dr. Bok Gyo Jeong  
Kean University

Dr. Bok Gyo Jeong holds a Ph.D. in Public Administration and International Development from the University of Pittsburgh. His research interests include comparative civil society, global and transnational policy issues, nonprofit higher education, social entrepreneurship, UN-NGO partnerships, and government-nonprofit collaboration. Dr. Jeong is the U.S. Chapter Chair of the Asian Association for Public Administration and has served as Chair of the Section on Nonprofits and as a Council member of the International Chapter of the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA). He also represents the Global Issue and Transnational Actors (GITA) common interest group at the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA).



Dr. Dean Knight  
Victoria University of Wellington

Dr. Dean Knight specialises in public law with a focus on constitutional and administrative law. His research includes judicial review of administrative action, local government and democracy, constitutional reform, and LGBTQ+ legal issues. Dean graduated with LLB (Hons) and BCA degrees from Victoria University of Wellington and completed a PhD at the London School of Economics and Political Science and an LLM by thesis at the University of British Columbia. He is currently a Visiting Fellow at LSE and has been an International Visiting Fellow at the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law. Dean is a member of the NZ Centre for Public Law, an executive committee member of the Law and Society Association of Australia and New Zealand, and serves on the editorial committee of the NZ Journal of Public and International Law.



Dr. Shawn Shih-hung Shieh  
Social Innovations Advisory & Freshwater Institute

Dr. Shawn Shih-hung Shieh is the founder and director of Social Innovations Advisory (New York) and Freshwater Institute (Taipei). With 20 years of experience in strengthening civil society and social movements in China and the Asia-Pacific, he founded Social Innovations Advisory in 2018 to build resilient civil societies in the global South. In 2024, he co-founded Freshwater Institute, a Taiwan-based nonprofit supporting human rights groups in East Asia.



Aoi Horiuchi  
Japan NGO Center for International Cooperation

Aoi Horiuchi is the Senior Advocacy Officer at JANIC and Deputy Director of THINK Lobby. He focuses on achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 16, and protecting civic space in Japan and Asia. Aoi is an active member of the Development Unit, Japan Civil Society Network on SDGs, and has participated in international fora such as the UN General Assembly, UN High-Level Political Forum, and past G7 and G20 Summits. He served as co-secretariat for the civil society platform on the G7 Ise-Shima Summit in 2016, Civil20 (C20) Sous-Sherpa in 2019 and C7 Steering Committee in 2023.



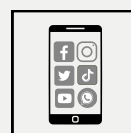
Lina Salim  
Asia Centre

Lina Salim is Asia Centre's Programme Coordinator. She has been active in advocacy works in Interreligious Dialogue and Women's Rights in Singapore. She holds a Master's degree in Southeast Asian Studies from the National University of Singapore (NUS) and a Bachelor's degree in Comparative Religion and Islamic Theology from the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM).



Julie Hunter  
(Moderator)  
International Center for Not-for-Profit Law

Her work is focused on safeguarding civic space and public participation across Asia. Her expertise centres around protecting rights and marginalised groups in regulatory frameworks related to civil society, resource governance, and climate change. Julie has consulted for various human rights institutions, including the Council of Europe Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, the European Court of Human Rights, the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the Coalition for the International Criminal Court. She is the author of influential publications on deep-sea mining, climate, and labour trafficking, which have led to regulatory improvements in the United States and Pacific Island countries. Julie holds a J.D. from Yale Law School, a M.Sc. from the London School of Economics, and a B.A. from Harvard University. She is a member of the New York Bar.



## PANEL 3: SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE – LESSONS FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA

Hosted by: International Development Research Centre

**Date:** 22 August 2024  
**Time:** 11:30 AM – 1 PM  
**Venue:** Gallery 1-2, 36/F

### Abstract

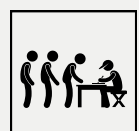
The Southeast Asia region boasts a dynamic history of vibrant and influential civic spaces. The achievements in this area include advances in electoral equity, human rights protection, and enhanced transparency and accountability mechanisms. However, civic space in Asia is at a critical juncture. The complex interplay of anti-rights movements, oppression by state and non-state actors, statelessness, and violent conflict presents significant challenges to civic space in the region.

Strengthening civic space requires resources and alliances to address these emerging challenges, which have shifted from mere representation to meaningful ownership by social groups. How does civic space adapt to new actors and emerging voices? Are these actors' needs, parameters of success, and visions different from those of the past? What are the key strategies for bolstering civic space in the region? How can we foster interaction and solidarity among diverse civic space actors?

This panel discussion will bring together civic space actors from the region to discuss their contributions and research priorities related to civic space. Drawing on their experiences with indigenous women, the Myanmar diaspora, and forced migrants, the panellists will highlight key research gaps and share their insights on bridging research and practice for the advancement of civic space in the region.

### Guiding Question:

- What are the three key characteristics of civic space that you experience?
- How do you experience change in the civic space?
- What are some of the positive and/or negative changes that you could highlight? Is there a mismatch between the role and expectations from civic space?
- What does an effective civic space look like? What are the responsibilities that civic space can and cannot do?
- Where does civic space draw its legitimacy from? How can this legitimacy strengthen actions?
- How well is civic space captured in research? There is a lot of emphasis on strategic alliances to strengthen civic space. What are your experiences of working with, and building alliances?



## PANEL 3: SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE – LESSONS FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA



**Naiyana Thanawattho**  
Asylum Access Thailand

Naiyana Thanawattho oversees Asylum Access Thailand's operations, including legal services, community engagement, and policy advocacy. She is a founding member of the Myanmar Response Network (MRN) and was the Coordinator for the Coalition for the Rights of Refugees and Stateless Persons (CRSP) from 2020 to 2022. Naiyana collaborates with other refugee networks on alternatives to detention and advocates for the recognition of refugees, including newcomers from Myanmar. Naiyana represents civil society organisations (CSOs) on the Thai Government's Sub-Committee under the Regulation of the Office of the Prime Minister on the Screening of Aliens who Enter the Kingdom and are Unable to Return to their Country of Origin (B.E. 2562, 2019), also known as the National Screening Mechanism. She integrates CSO and refugee perspectives into the Sub-Committee's work on developing screening guidelines, procedures, and criteria. In November 2023, Naiyana was appointed to the Working Groups under the House of Representatives' Sub-Committees on Irregular Migration and Border Issues, contributing to a report on irregular migration, including urban refugees in Bangkok and new Myanmar refugees at the Thai border. Prior to her role at Asylum Access, Naiyana spent over 12 years in child protection with UNICEF, UNHCR, and Save the Children.



**Pyrou Chung**  
Open Development Initiative

Pyrou Chung directs the East-West Management Institute's programmes on human rights and environmental justice in Southeast Asia through the Open Development Initiative. With over 20 years of experience in the development sector across Asia, Africa, and Australia, Pyrou has worked with open data platforms to promote data transparency. Recently, she founded the Knowledge for Development Foundation (K4D) in Thailand, focusing on evidence-based decision-making, digital gender inclusion, and indigenous data sovereignty. Her work includes facilitating a network of environmental women's activists to enhance women's leadership in water governance across the Mekong, aiming to shift deficit narratives through skills and knowledge building. As an ecologist and sustainable development expert, Pyrou's work addresses the intersection of environmental governance, conservation, and human rights, emphasising the role of digital technologies and artificial intelligence in advancing these areas.



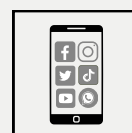
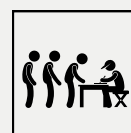
**Napas Thein**  
Myanmar Policy & Community  
Knowledge Hub - MyPACK

Napas Thein is a recent graduate of the Master of Public Policy Programme at the University of Toronto and a Fellow at the Myanmar Policy and Community Knowledge Hub (MyPACK) at the Munk School. Raised as a second-generation Burmese-Canadian in Toronto, Napas has been active in the local Burmese and broader diaspora communities. His involvement includes leading Myanmar student groups at the university and serving as President of the Burma-Canadian Association of Ontario, alongside other fundraising-focused Myanmar organisations. His engagement with diaspora has been marked by management of inter-generational and inter-cultural events, work and challenges with raising awareness to Burmese political issues in the Canadian context, and community-based political organising in Canada.



**Caroline Ford**  
(Moderator)  
IDRC

Caroline Ford has more than 25 years of experience in the fields of governance, justice, human rights and development. She worked in Africa, the Balkans and at a global level on human rights, international development, humanitarian emergency response, and communications for development. Caroline has held senior management positions at BBC Media Action, Amnesty International and UNICEF. She joined IDRC in February 2021 and leads the work with southern institutions on inclusive, accountable, and transparent governance.





## PANEL 4: CRIMINALISATION AND PROSECUTION OF CHANGEMAKERS

Hosted by: Council of Asia Liberals & Democrats

**Date:** 22 August 2024

**Time:** 2 PM - 3:30 PM

**Venue:** Gallery 3, 36/F

### Abstract

Over the past decade, shrinking civic space has significantly impacted civil society and political actors, leading to a global decline in democratic freedoms. Authoritarian regimes are increasingly using tactics like harassment, threats, and repressive laws to silence dissent.

In Cambodia, the government has used repressive measures such as dissolving the Cambodian National Rescue Party and enacting laws like the National Internet Gateway (NIG) to control online activities and suppress dissent, drawing criticism from the UN Human Rights Council.

In the Philippines, former President Duterte's "red-tagging" campaign and the imprisonment of Senator Leila de Lima reflect the severe erosion of human rights and freedoms. De Lima's recent exoneration highlights ongoing issues with legal and political repression.

Singapore's Foreign Interference (Countermeasures) Act (FICA) poses a broad threat to fundamental freedoms by targeting a wide range of political and public activities, leading to increased harassment and prosecution of critics.

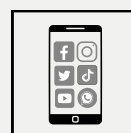
Taiwan has seen controversial reforms giving lawmakers significant powers over the executive branch, raising concerns about the separation of powers and potential threats to national security.

These developments in Cambodia, Philippines, Singapore, and Taiwan reflect the curtailment of fundamental freedoms felt not just by civil society organizations, political activists and journalists, but also by elected officials. They are either put behind bars, confronted by strategic lawsuits, or worse, killed. This panel will focus on the experiences of speakers from Cambodia, the Philippines, and Singapore, who will share their insights on the current state of affairs in their respective countries and provide ideas on the next steps vis-a-vis addressing criminalization and prosecution.

### Guiding Questions

- How did the government or ruling party use criminalization or the prosecution of changemakers as a political tool? What are the factors that made this possible?
- What are the impacts of the weaponization of the law on your work as opposition politicians and on the general public?
- How do we respond to public clamor, sometimes by the majority of the public, who are in favor of criminalization? How can we communicate the case of changemakers when all the resources and machinery are in the hands of the government?
- As members of the opposition who continue to uphold fundamental rights, how can political parties contribute to the strengthening of civil liberties and expansion of democratic spaces?

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# PANEL DETAILS

## PANEL 4: CRIMINALIZATION AND PROSECUTION OF CHANGEMAKERS



**Senator Mardi Seng**  
Cambodian Senator;  
Chairperson, CALD

Mardi Seng is a Cambodian politician and advocate, currently serving as the chairperson of CALD and a senator. In the February 2024 Cambodian senatorial elections, he was elected as one of the opposition members and will be returning to the senate, where he previously served as secretary of the Anti-Corruption Commission. He has extensive experience in managing electoral campaigns, having worked as the treasurer of the Sam Rainsy Party (SRP). With a background in US banking focusing on Compliance, Audit, and Risk Management, he holds a bachelor's degree in Economics from Calvin College and an MBA from Northeastern University in Boston.



**Jaslyn Go**  
Cadre Member, SDP; Chairperson,  
CALD Women's Caucus

Jaslyn Go has been an international representative for the Singapore Democratic Party since 2008 and is the current chairperson of the CALD Women's Caucus. She has been actively involved in strengthening women's leadership roles within CALD parties and has participated in various political and civil events. Jaslyn contested in the 2015 General Election and served as a fundraiser for SDP from 2008 to 2018. Her dedication to politics is driven by her commitment to championing underprivileged citizens in Singapore and advocating for a freer, more egalitarian society.



**Atty. Arlene  
"Kaka" J. Bag-ao**  
Former MP, Liberal Party,  
Philippines; Former Governor,  
Dinagat Islands

Atty. Arlene "Kaka" J. Bag-ao is a lawyer and human rights advocate with a distinguished career. She was a Hubert H. Humphrey Fellow and studied International Human Rights and Peace at the University of Minnesota. She has held significant roles, including Congresswoman of Akbayan Party-List and Representative of Dinagat Islands, where she championed numerous progressive legislations. As Governor, she focused on empowering marginalized groups and effectively managing the province's COVID-19 response. Her work has earned her multiple accolades, and she continues her advocacy as a lawyer and community organiser.



**Freddy Lim Thsiong-tso**  
Former MP, Democratic  
Progressive Party, Taiwan

Freddy Lim, known for his role as the lead vocalist of the metal band CHTHONIC, made history as the world's first metal musician to serve in a parliament. He was first elected to Taiwan's Legislative Yuan in 2016 and re-elected in 2020. During his tenure, he focused on foreign affairs, national defense, transitional justice, and human rights, while also advocating for marriage equality and cultural policies. Freddy's involvement in various human rights and cultural issues underscores his commitment to democratic values and international diplomacy.



**Paolo Zamora**  
(Moderator)  
Council of Asian Liberals and  
Democrats (CALD)

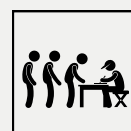
Paolo Zamora is the program manager who supervises CALD's executive mission programs and is in charge of the CALD Smart City and Smart Mobility projects. He is an international coordinator with over 20 years of professional experience in program development, conference and workshop management, stakeholder communications and stakeholder engagement. He previously served as the Chief-of-Staff of the Presidential Adviser for Environment Protection under Philippine President Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III. Paolo is a member of the Liberal Party and was part of the political communications team of the Leni-Kiko campaign during the 2022 presidential election. Paolo finished Political Science at the University of the Philippines and completed his Program Management Professional Certification from Google.

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9TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

## SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE IN ASIA STORIES OF RESISTANCE AND PUSHBACK

21 - 23 AUGUST 2024 - BANGKOK, THAILAND



## PANEL 5: POLITICAL PARTIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY: EXPLORING HOW OPPOSITION PARTIES BOLSTER OR UNDERMINE THE CIVIC SPACE

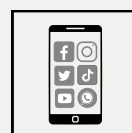
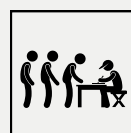
Hosted by: International Republican Institute

**Date:** 22 August 2024  
**Time:** 2 PM - 3:30 PM  
**Venue:** Gallery 4, 36/F

### Abstract

What is the role of opposition political parties in directly or indirectly protecting civic space? Opposition political parties can enhance the influence, effectiveness, and capacity of civil society groups by forming civic alliances and coalitions, proposing or opposing legislation that impacts civic space, promoting civic education, employing broad-based and inclusive voter appeals that foster social solidarity, and amplifying the policy demands of civil society organisations. However, barriers to these actions exist.

This panel will bring together political party members, researchers, and civic leaders to explore the conditions under which opposition parties do or do not support civil society in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Indonesia.





## PANEL 5: POLITICAL PARTIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY: EXPLORING HOW OPPOSITION PARTIES BOLSTER OR UNDERMINE THE CIVIC SPACE



Jehan Perera  
IRI Sri Lanka

Jehan has over 15 years of experience working on human rights, labour rights, and civil society empowerment. He is also a member of the Sri Lanka Collective Against Torture and the Movement for Plantation Peoples' Land Rights.



Khoirunnisa Nur  
Agustyati  
Perludem

Khoirunnisa joined Perludem in 2012. Perludem is an independent non-profit organisation in Indonesia dedicated to research, advocacy, monitoring, education, and training in the field of elections and democracy. Her research and professional experience focus on electoral system design, electoral management, and women in politics.



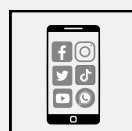
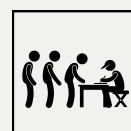
Arifa Noor  
Dawn Media Group

Arifa is a leading opinion writer and broadcaster with Pakistan's Dawn Media Group. Based in Islamabad, she hosts NewsWise on the Dawn News television channel, covering politics, human rights, and security issues. She also writes a weekly opinion column for the Dawn newspaper and has over 25 years of experience in print and television journalism.



Kelly Tsanova  
(Moderator)  
IRI Thailand

Kelly joined IRI with a long tenure in the Southeast Asia region, having managed programs in Vietnam, Myanmar, and Cambodia for over 13 years that support humanitarian and development initiatives on mine action and gender empowerment.



## PANEL 6: NATIONAL GOVERNMENT-RUN RELIEF FUNDS AND OTHER BARRIERS TO CSO RESOURCING

Hosted by: International Center for the Not-for-Profit Law

**Date:** 22 August 2024  
**Time:** 2 PM - 3:30 PM  
**Venue:** Gallery 1-2, 36/F

### Abstract

During the early phase of COVID-19, many governments in Asia established relief funds to address the urgent needs created by the pandemic. Countries such as India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Vietnam set up these funds, which were often government-run but heavily reliant on private donations, sometimes with tax or other charitable contribution incentives. Despite these efforts, the relief funds faced widespread criticism regarding issues of accountability, transparency, and effectiveness. Concurrently, civil society in these countries encountered increasing difficulties, exacerbated by the demands of the pandemic and increasingly restrictive environments affecting their operations and resources.

How have government relief funds impacted civil society and the nonprofit sector, particularly during emergencies and in contexts of shrinking civic space? This panel will feature regional experts and discuss prominent case studies of government-run COVID relief funds in Asia, followed by a Q&A session.



## PANEL 6: NATIONAL GOVERNMENT-RUN RELIEF FUNDS AND OTHER BARRIERS TO CSO RESOURCING



Kirana Anjani

ASEAN Parliamentarians for  
Human Rights

Kirana is an early-career professional specialising in democracy and civic freedom in Southeast Asia. She demonstrates strong strategic planning and relationship-building skills, having worked with parliamentarians, civil society organisations, and other institutions across the region and beyond. Kirana is committed to fostering multi-stakeholder alliances to address regional human rights and political challenges. In her personal time, she enjoys the company of her feline and plant companions.



Biraj Patnaik

National Foundation for India

Biraj is the Executive Director of the National Foundation for India and previously served as the South Asia Director of Amnesty International and was the principal adviser to the commissioners of the Indian Supreme Court on the right to food for over a decade. Biraj has been involved in the right to food campaign in India since its inception and co-founded the 'Mitandin' community health worker programme, which trained and deployed 70,000 health workers in Chhattisgarh. He holds a postgraduate degree in management from the Institute of Rural Management, Anand (IRMA), and was a Chevening Gurukul Senior Scholar at the London School of Economics and Social Sciences.



Jose Enrique A. Africa

IBON Foundation

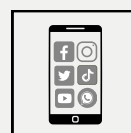
IBON Foundation is an independent non-governmental organisation providing research, information, and education services to people's movements in the Philippines and abroad since 1978. Jose Enrique, its Executive Director, is also a Board Member of Altermidya, a fellow of the Center for People Empowerment in Governance (CenPEG) and the Center for Anti-Imperialist Studies (CAIS), and a member of the coordinating committee of 'Pagbabago! People's Movement for Change'. He is also an editor of the online news magazine Bulatlat. Jose Enrique has previously worked with the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), evaluated NGOs with Management Systems Advancement, Inc (MASAI), served as a legislative officer in Congress/Parliament with Bayan Muna, and worked as a peasant organiser. He has been an active educator for people's organisations and a resource person for schools, NGOs, government, and media since the 1990s. He holds a Master's degree (MSc) in Development Studies and a Bachelor's degree (BSc) in Philosophy and Economics from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).



Julia Wang  
(Moderator)

International Center  
for Not-for-Profit Law

Julia's work focuses on expanding and safeguarding civic space and public participation across the region. In addition to working on human rights issues around health, climate, and equality, Julia co-founded and has managed a nonprofit focused on the history of immigration and the Asian diaspora since 2018, supporting communities in the U.S. and Europe during the COVID-19 pandemic. She has published several articles on history and Asian American identity. Julia holds a J.D. from Yale Law School, an MPhil in History from the University of Cambridge, where she was a Gates Scholar, and a B.A. from Harvard University. She is a member of the New York Bar.



## PANEL 7: BEYOND BORDERS AND ETHNICITIES – AMPLIFY THE VOICE AND DIVERSITY

Hosted by: Radio Taiwan International

**Date:** 22 August 2024  
**Time:** 4 PM – 5:30 PM  
**Venue:** Gallery 1-2, 36/F

### Abstract

This panel will delve into key issues such as multiculturalism, cross-cultural communication, the defence of democracy and freedom, democratic backsliding, and Taiwan's role in the current global landscape.

Taiwan has recently become a focal point of international media attention, positioned at the forefront of geopolitical tensions. The global community recognises Taiwan's vital role in the technology supply chain and increasingly values its longstanding contributions to public health, the defence of freedom and democracy, and its resistance to cognitive warfare.

Rti, a 96-year-old public media organisation, has evolved alongside Taiwan's democratisation. It has grown into an international public broadcaster, sharing Taiwan's stories in 20 languages and serving the interests of migrant workers and immigrants. Rti's core missions are to safeguard freedom of speech and to amplify diverse voices from the island to a global audience. Taiwan's democratic environment not only enables Rti to fulfil these missions but also fosters a diversity of voices across Asia.

In the “Beyond Borders and Ethnicities” panel, representatives from various ethnic groups in Taiwan will share their stories and discuss how they pursue inclusion and mutual prosperity on Taiwanese soil. Taiwan's democratic system is crucial not only for its citizens but also for protecting and expanding civic space across Asia.



# PANEL DETAILS

## PANEL 7: BEYOND BORDERS AND ETHNICITIES: AMPLIFY THE VOICE AND DIVERSITY



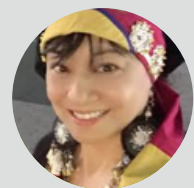
Filip Noubel  
Global Voices

Filip has 25 years of expertise in media and media development in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia, China, Taiwan and Mongolia with a focus on innovation (data and drone journalism, cross-regional reporting), media in translation, cross-sector collaboration (civil society, citizen journalism, mainstream media). With on-going research and analysis on information distribution and knowledge sharing in transitional societies, and presentation at various platforms including Ted, Carnegie, Aspen Institute, UN, Asia Society, Prague Media point, China in the World, Disruption Lab, New York University Prague campus. Main areas of focus: disinformation, independent sinophone media, Belt and Road initiative, Moscow narratives in Central Asia and Central Europe.



Tony Thamsir  
Radio Taiwan International

From the time Tony came to Taiwan to study in his early years and became a member of the new immigrant community, he has witnessed firsthand the gradual rise in the number of new immigrants in Taiwan and the growing demand for multilingual broadcasting. As a member of the broadcasting media, he is dedicated to serving this expanding population. Throughout his career, he has experienced the evolution of Taiwan's policies toward new immigrants and has found his professional mission in this process. Using broadcasting as a bridge, Tony actively promotes the integration of new immigrants into Taiwanese society, providing crucial support and services to them. His efforts have not only helped new residents adapt to their new environment but also facilitated the cultural integration of Taiwanese society, making him a guiding light within the new immigrant community.



Mulihey Talus  
FM 96.3 Alian Radio

Mulihey Talus lived in a generation in which the indigenous cultures are gradually fading. In her quest for self-exploration and identity, she chose the path of broadcasting, determined to actively promote indigenous culture. Over the past two decades, Taiwan has seen significant improvement in policies towards indigenous peoples, progressively enhancing the protection and promotion of their cultures and rights. This includes establishing the Council of Indigenous Peoples and the Indigenous Peoples Cultural Foundation (IPCF), as well as the creation of Taiwan indigenous TV and FM96.3 Alian Radio. These initiatives not only elevate respect for indigenous cultures but also foster greater participation and expression of indigenous voices in the media sphere.



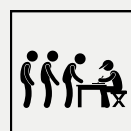
Dr. Martin Petlach  
Mendel University

Dr. Martin Petlach currently works as Assistant Professor at Mendel University in Brno, Czech Republic. He obtained a Ph.D. in Political Science and his research interests center on European and Southeast Asian comparative politics as well as diplomacy and diplomatic protocol.



Cheryl Lai  
(Moderator)  
Radio Taiwan International

Cheryl Lai has worked in Taiwan and Hong Kong media for more than three decades. She is one of the founders of the Association for Taiwan Journalists (ATJ) and Taiwan's current Foreign Correspondents Club (TFCC). She also served as a culture attache in London from 2017 to 2019 and was involved in a Taiwan-Japan cultural exchange project from 2019 to 2021. In addition to her experience in media, she has also worked for various NGOs, including Taiwan's Jane Goodall Institute and Taiwan Association for Human Rights.



## PANEL 8: FAKE NEWS AND DEMOCRACY

Hosted by: La Trobe University

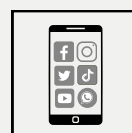
**Date:** 22 August 2024

**Time:** 4 PM - 5:30 PM

**Venue:** Gallery 3, 36/F

### Abstract

What is fake news? Who is proliferating it, and how? What is its impact on public opinion, trust in government, and the quality of democracy more generally? This panel considers evidence from Australia on the extent, nature and impact fake news has on democratic institutions. It considers how fake news has been defined and understood in the Australian context, regulatory responses from governments and industries and how it intersects with other political phenomena such as populism.





## PANEL 8: FAKE NEWS AND DEMOCRACY



Phoebe Hayman

School of Humanities and  
Social Sciences,  
La Trobe University

Phoebe Hayman is a casual academic and PhD Candidate in the department of Politics, Media and Philosophy. Her thesis focuses on political participation and volunteers in field campaigns of independent candidates. Phoebe is keen to chat about elections, volunteers, community organising, and in particular, the campaigns of Greens and independent candidates.



Dr. Raul Sanchez-  
Urribarri

School of Humanities and  
Social Sciences,  
La Trobe University

His research focuses on constitutionalism, judicial politics, and the rule of law, with an emphasis on contexts of democratic deterioration, particularly in Latin America. He earned his PhD in Political Science from the University of South Carolina, an LLM from Cambridge University, and a Law degree with honours from Universidad Católica Andrés Bello in Caracas. Before joining La Trobe, Dr Sanchez-Urribarri was a Visiting Assistant Professor at Tulane University and is currently a Non-Resident Fellow at Tulane's Center for Inter-American Policy Research (CIPR). His academic interests also include the internationalisation of higher education, particularly in the areas of international mobility and intercultural teaching.



Dr. Nicholas Barry

School of Humanities and  
Social Sciences,  
La Trobe University

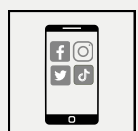
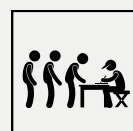
His research and teaching span political theory, political institutions, and Australian politics. Dr Barry has published in several scholarly outlets, including the Journal of Politics, Governance, Parliamentary Affairs, the Journal of Applied Philosophy, the Canadian Journal of Political Science\*, and the \*Australian Journal of Political Science\*. His current research projects explore contemporary theories of egalitarian justice, the dynamics of constitutional norms and conventions, and the contemporary Australian party system. In his teaching, he focuses on Australian politics, public policy, and political ideas and ideologies.



Prof. Rebecca Strating  
(Moderator)

School of Humanities and  
Social Sciences,  
La Trobe University

Rebecca specialises in Asian regional security, maritime disputes, and Australian foreign and defence policy. Her publications include the forthcoming Girt by Sea: Reimagining Australia's Security and co-editing Blue Security: Maritime Strategies in the Indo-Pacific (2024). Bec has authored three books, including Defending the Maritime Rules-Based Order (2020), and has published widely in top journals like Contemporary Security Policy. She leads the DFAT-funded "Blue Security" network and has secured over \$1.8 million in research funding. Bec is a non-visiting fellow at the Royal Australian Navy's Seapower Centre, a member of the East West Centre Council on Indo-Pacific Relations, and President of the Women in International Security Australia steering committee. She has received awards like the 2024 Bernard Brodie Prize for best article in Contemporary Security Policy and the 2023 Research Excellence in Engagement and Impact award. She has held fellowships at the East West Center in Washington DC and the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore. A regular contributor to outlets like the Lowy Institute and The Guardian, she frequently comments for media such as the ABC, BBC, and SCMP. Bec earned her PhD from Monash University in 2013.



## PANEL 9: THE VANGUARDS OF CHANGE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIGENOUS YOUTH AND WOMEN

Hosted by: International IDEA

**Date:** 23 August 2024  
**Time:** 9 AM - 10:30 AM  
**Venue:** Gallery 1-2, 36/F

### Abstract

Asia is home to the largest population of Indigenous Peoples globally, with approximately 411 million individuals identifying as or considered Indigenous. Despite this significant demographic presence, Indigenous Peoples remain one of the most politically excluded and marginalised groups. International standards, such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), along with various national legal frameworks, recognise their rights, yet Indigenous communities continue to struggle for self-determination, cultural preservation, and the protection of their lands, territories, and resources.

These struggles are exacerbated by the ongoing shrinkage of democratic and civic spaces across the region, which poses additional challenges for Indigenous youth and women. These groups are not only the most affected by these constraints but also play a crucial role in advocating for transformative changes that can secure their communities' rights and futures. The session will highlight the roles of Indigenous youth and women in tackling these challenges and discuss innovative strategies and opportunities to advocate for Indigenous rights within the constrained environment.





# PANEL DETAILS

## PANEL 9: THE VANGUARDS OF CHANGE: CHALLENGES OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIGENOUS YOUTH AND WOMEN



**Charu Bikash Tripura**  
(Moderator)  
Asia Indigenous  
People's Pact

Charu Bikash Tripura earned an MBA from the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh, in 2003. From 2005 to 2015, he worked with the UNDP as a Governance Officer on the Chittagong Hill Tract Development Facility and Confidence Building projects in Bangladesh. Since 2016, he has been with AIPP, focusing on strengthening the institutional capacity of its member organisations and building leadership among Indigenous youths and elders across Asia. He has participated in several significant global events, including "Digital Revolution for Under-Resourced Languages" conference in Asia, held from February 19-20, 2019, at the Nara Institute of Science and Technology (NAIST) in Japan and a subsequent event on the same topic in France, COP-28 in Dubai in 2023, and the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) in New York, USA, in 2024. Charu Bikash Tripura is also experienced in facilitating and moderating regional workshops and training sessions.



**Edchamcy "Edward"  
Intang Abelardo**  
Bangsamoro Autonomous  
Region in Muslim Mindanao &  
International IDEA IP  
Champion

Edward is a member of the Teduray tribe from the Southern Philippines, currently serving as Political Affairs Officer VI in the Legislative Division of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) under the Office of MP Froilyn T. Mendoza. As Deputy Secretary of the Indigenous Peoples Democratic Party (IPDP), he ensures the representation and protection of Indigenous communities within the new parliamentary framework ahead of the first Bangsamoro Parliamentary elections (2025). His leadership extends to co-founding the United Indigenous Peoples Youth Organization (2016) and chairing the Network of Non-Moro Indigenous Peoples Youth Organization. Recognised as one of 20 Indigenous Peoples Champions by International IDEA and the Institute for Autonomy and Governance, Edward advocates for the contextualisation and decolonisation of policies to uphold Indigenous self-determination.



**Prof. Awi Mona**  
National Dong Hwa University

Prof. Awi Mona, affiliated with the Seediq nation, is a legal and human rights scholar with significant contributions to indigenous rights movements in Taiwan. A leading authority on indigenous law and governance, Awi has led efforts to integrate indigenous ancestral intelligence into state legal frameworks. His work as chair of the Subcommittee on Land Claims within Taiwan's Presidential Office Indigenous Historical Justice and Transitional Justice Committee (2017-2020) involved engaging with indigenous communities to investigate land claims and produce recommendations for administrative reform. As Director of the Indigenous Legal Service Center at the Legal Aid Foundation since 2018, Awi has collaborated with legal professionals and Indigenous activists to litigate major cases on sovereignty and natural resources. He also has a consulting role with Taiwan's National Human Rights Commission (2023-2024).



**Falguni "Flora" Tripura**  
Bangladesh Indigenous  
Women's Network

Falguni belongs to the Tripura community, the third-largest group in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. She serves as General Secretary and Secretariat Coordinator of the Bangladesh Indigenous Women's Network (BIWN) and Women-related Secretary of the Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum (BIPF). With over 14 years of advocacy for the rights of Indigenous women and girls in Bangladesh, Falguni has been instrumental in documenting and monitoring human rights violations against these groups. As BIWN's coordinator, she actively engages in advocacy campaigns and works with human rights institutions to pursue justice for affected Indigenous women and girls.



**Renuka Gurung**  
International IDEA Nepal

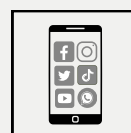
Renuka brings over 25 years of experience in the development sector in Nepal, complemented by regional experience in Bangladesh and India. Her extensive work spans managing diverse teams and implementing programmes focused on women and girls, inclusion, governance, and democracy. Renuka has worked with a wide range of partners, from small community-based organisations to major INGOs, bilateral and multilateral agencies, and UN bodies. Her expertise lies in promoting democracy, governance, and social inclusion, particularly for disadvantaged groups, including Dalits, Janjatis, and Indigenous Peoples. As a member of the Gurung caste—classified as Janajatis and falling under the 'Disadvantaged' category—Renuka's work is deeply rooted in the challenges and opportunities facing Indigenous communities.

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9TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

## SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE IN ASIA STORIES OF RESISTANCE AND PUSHBACK

21 - 23 AUGUST 2024 - BANGKOK, THAILAND



## PANEL 10: STRATEGIES FOR DEFENDING AND EXPANDING CIVIC SPACE: TACTICS FOR BUILDING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH DECISIONMAKERS

Hosted by: Counterpart International

**Date:** 23 August 2024  
**Time:** 11 AM – 12:30 AM  
**Venue:** Gallery 1-2, 36/F

### Abstract

This session will delve into effective strategies for engaging with governments amid shrinking civic spaces, with a particular focus on South and Southeast Asia, including countries like Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Timor-Leste. Panelists will share insights on how to navigate complex political dynamics and identify strategic entry points for meaningful engagement with decision-makers. By examining these case studies, the session will offer practical guidance on leveraging political opportunities in challenging environments.

Following the panel discussions, an interactive workshop will provide participants with the opportunity to exchange experiences, share successful strategies, and identify common obstacles. The goal is to collaboratively develop actionable plans that can be adapted and implemented in their respective contexts. This session is designed to equip civil society leaders and activists with innovative tools and tactics to build constructive relationships with decision-makers, ultimately fostering collaboration and resilience in increasingly restrictive civic spaces.



## PANEL 10: STRATEGIES FOR DEFENDING AND EXPANDING CIVIC SPACE: TACTICS FOR BUILDING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH DECISIONMAKERS



Kourtney Pompi

Counterpart International

Kourtney brings over 24 years of experience in international development, with a significant focus on citizen engagement and the promotion of transparency and accountability. Her leadership in designing and evaluating projects that empower citizens to engage with their governments is pivotal in advancing fundamental freedoms. Kourtney's expertise spans various areas, including electoral participation, peacebuilding, and inclusive development, reflecting her comprehensive approach to fostering democratic resilience in diverse contexts. Her extensive background with organisations such as the International Republican Institute and the U.S. Department of State's Bureau for Democracy, Rights, and Labor, positions her as a key player in the global efforts to strengthen democratic institutions.



Arzak Khan

Innovation for Change –  
South Asia Hub

Arzak is a prominent figure in the digital policy arena, with a particular emphasis on internet development and cybersecurity in the Global South. His work examines the intersection of technology and human rights, addressing the complex challenges posed by AI, including bias, surveillance, and the erosion of accountability. Arzak's contributions highlight the importance of including marginalised voices from the South in global cyber policy discussions, a crucial aspect in ensuring that technological advancements do not exacerbate existing inequalities. His academic achievements, including a PhD in Mediatization, social and cultural change, further bolster his authority in this field.



Flora Soriano Menezes

Judicial System Monitoring  
Project (Timor Leste)

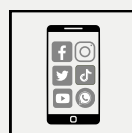
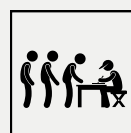
Flora has dedicated her career to enhancing the justice sector through legal research and advocacy. Her role as Program Coordinator involves not only overseeing training and advocacy but also directly engaging with communities to disseminate information about the formal justice system. Flora's work is instrumental in bridging the gap between legal institutions and the public, ensuring that legislative processes are transparent and accessible. Her involvement in the revision of domestic violence laws in Timor-Leste underlines her commitment to advancing legal protections for vulnerable groups, a critical step in strengthening the rule of law in post-conflict societies.



Sarah Little  
(Moderator)

Counterpart International

Sarah focuses on new program development. Previously, Sarah was a Senior Technical Specialist at DAI where she provided technical assistance to USAID governance programs globally. Sarah also designed and managed a portfolio of democracy and governance programs across Southern and East Africa at the National Democratic Institute (NDI), including civil society elections monitoring in Zimbabwe and civil society capacity strengthening for collective action towards a democratic transition in Eswatini. Before joining NDI, Sarah spent seven years at the Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF), piloting transparency and accountability programs globally, including a two-year stint as Chief Executive Officer for the organization's African affiliate, PTF-Africa. Sarah has also held positions at Gender Action and the Democracy in Africa Research Unit at the University of Cape Town in South Africa.



## PANEL 11: INFORMATION INTEGRITY AND DIGITAL PUBLIC SPHERE IN ASIA

Hosted by: International Development Research Centre

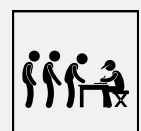
**Date:** 23 August 2024  
**Time:** 1:30 PM – 3 PM  
**Venue:** Gallery 1-2, 36/F

### Abstract

Information is how we make sense of the world and society around us. The modes of public information— how we generate, share, and process it – have undergone drastic changes with the advent of technology and the diversity of expression. Today, public information seeks a delicate balance between freedom of expression, regulatory frameworks, and quality. As research continues to identify the use of misinformation and disinformation campaigns to influence public behaviour in elections, public health issues, gender-based violence, and other – if not all – areas of life, the research agenda on information integrity needs new breakthroughs. This panel brings together insights from researchers and practitioners to reflect on the research priorities for an equitable digital public sphere and information integrity in the region. What are the priorities for a gender-inclusive digital public sphere? What are the key research gaps in our understanding of tech-facilitated gender-based violence in Asia? What does evidence against disinformation and for better information integrity look like? What support do researchers and practitioners need to pursue these ideas? What are the shared priorities of practitioners and researchers working on information integrity issues? The insights from the panellists will outline a research agenda to strengthen the integrity of information and build a more informed and resilient society in the face of the ever-expanding digital public sphere.

### Guiding Questions:

- What are the three key unknowns when we think about the digital public sphere and civic space?
- Do we have unfair expectations from regulations? Are there any other emerging approaches to safe digital public spaces?
- Are digital communities good at self-regulating?
- Has the digital public sphere altered our reasons for consuming information?
- What does reliable information mean in the ongoing information integrity approaches?



## PANEL 11: INFORMATION INTEGRITY AND DIGITAL PUBLIC SPHERE IN ASIA



Rossine Fallorina  
Sigla Research Center

Rossine Fallorina is the managing director of Sigla Research Center, a non-profit organization that envisions a healthier public sphere for Philippines. A disinformation researcher since 2019, he has co-authored several reports on disinformation, including Human Rights in Survival Mode: Rebuilding Trust and Supporting Digital Workers in the Philippines (2021), Parallel Public Spheres: Influence Operations in the 2022 Philippine Elections (2022), and From Disinformation to Influence Operations: The Evolution of Disinformation in Three Electoral Cycles (2023).



Wathshlah Naidu  
Centre for Independent Journalism

Wathshlah Naidu is the Executive Director of the Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ), a non-profit organisation promoting media freedom, access to information and freedom of expression. She's also been part of Women's Aid Organisation and the International Women's Rights Action Watch, as well as UNHCR. In this episode, we discuss her journey as an activist for more than 20 years, feminism and working in WAO, and how growing up with a mom who was religious and slightly conservative and a dad who was a socialist shaped her worldviews.



Malavika Rajkumar  
IT for Change

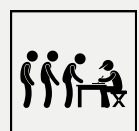
Malavika works on intersections of digital justice and the law. Her main areas of research include women's rights, child rights, social welfare legislations, gender based violence and information design. Previously she was a Research Fellow at Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, Delhi/ Content Lead for its legal -tech initiative Nyaaya.



Kundan Mishra  
(Moderator)

International Development  
Research Centre

Kundan's work revolves around research on issues of democratic participation, inclusion, civic space and forced migration, in South and Southeast Asia.



## PANEL 12: FOR FREE CIVIL ACTIVITIES IN TODAY'S WORLD WHERE SOCIAL NETWORKING HAS BECOME THE NORM: A CASE STUDY ON YOUNG GENERATION IN JAPAN

Hosted by: Pacifica GK

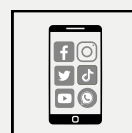
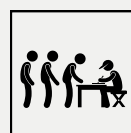
**Date:** 23 August 2024

**Time:** 1:30 PM - 3 PM

**Venue:** Gallery 3, 36/F

### Abstract

This panel will discuss how communication through the latest digital technologies, such as social networking, may or may not contribute to the construction of a free public space in which citizens can participate. We will first discuss the characteristics of life in which social networking sites permeate and the kind of communication that takes place there. Then, after, we will discuss what constitutes freedom. From there, we will move on to discuss issues and matters to keep in mind when using social media to support free civic activities.





# PANEL DETAILS

## PANEL 12: FOR FREE CIVIL ACTIVITIES IN TODAY'S WORLD WHERE SOCIAL NETWORKING HAS BECOME THE NORM: A CASE STUDY ON YOUNG GENERATION IN JAPAN



Dr. Jun Sakamoto  
Hosei University

Dr. Jun Sakamoto is a Professor in the Faculty of Lifelong Learning and Career Studies at Hosei University in Tokyo. In addition to his teaching role, he serves as the director of the Librarian Training Course at Hosei University. He is also the president of the Asia-Pacific Media and Information Literacy Education Centre (AMILEC), where he plays a significant role in advancing media and information literacy education across the region.



Prof. Dr. Taro Mochizuki  
Graduate School of Humanities,  
Osaka University

Prof. Dr. Taro Mochizuki, PhD, has been a philosophy professor at Osaka University since 1998 and is also a visiting professor at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok. His publications include works on philosophical practice, Descartes, Fukushima's aftermath, and Tanabe Hajime's conversion to Shin Buddhism, appearing in journals such as Philosophical Practice and Counseling, Journal of Humanities Therapy, and Prajna Vihara.



Prof. Tetsuya Kono  
Rikkyo University

Prof. Dr. Tetsuya Kono received his Ph.D. in Philosophy from Keio University. His research interests lie in phenomenology, philosophy of mind, and theoretical psychology. He has also been conducting collaborative research on the education for children/persons with disability from the phenomenological perspective. He is also concerned in environmental philosophy, environmental ethics, and environmental aesthetics.



Prof. Dr. Kasem  
Phenpinant  
Chulalongkorn University

Prof. Dr. Kasem Phenpinant majored in post-modern continental philosophy and obtained a doctoral degree from the New School for Social Research, New York. with his dissertation, The Seduction of Jacques Derrida: Deconstruction and the Ethicalization of the Political (2004).



Hiroki Sato  
Rikkyo University

Mr. Hiroki Sato is a third-year student in the Department of Education at Rikkyo University, majoring in philosophy of education.



James Yellowlees Ph.D.  
(Moderator)  
Pacifica GK

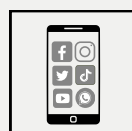
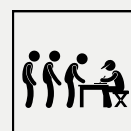
Experienced executive with a strong demonstrated history of working in the management consulting industry. Skilled in Marketing Management, Negotiation, Business Planning, Coaching, and Entrepreneurship. A Ph.D. in Economics/Politics from The University of Tokyo.

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9TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

## SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE IN ASIA STORIES OF RESISTANCE AND PUSHBACK

21 - 23 AUGUST 2024 - BANGKOK, THAILAND



## PANEL 13: AN ANTIDOTE TO DEMOCRATIC DECLINE? STORIES OF DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY FROM ASIA

Hosted by: The Asia Foundation

**Date:** 23 August 2024  
**Time:** 1:30 PM – 3 PM  
**Venue:** Gallery 4, 36/F

### Abstract

With an eye on troubling trends throughout Asia, this panel seeks to explore examples of resistance to democratic decline evident in practices of deliberative local democracy in several Asian contexts. Instances of deliberative democratic practice potentially offer a powerful antidote to the widespread trend of democratic decline by creating open space – physical or digital – for debate and contestation among diverse voices. Deliberative dialogue deepens everyday democratic practices, beyond election cycles, contributing, in turn, to the democratic character of those. Local democratic practices are especially significant at a time in which, throughout Asia, information disorder is causing citizens to disengage from politics.

The panel will explore the experiences of deliberative democratic practice – in citizen juries, assemblies and other mechanisms – of three government/civil society leaders and Asia Foundation partners. They will share their insights into creating deliberative spaces and the transformations they can enable.





## PANEL 13: AN ANTIDOTE TO DEMOCRATIC DECLINE? STORIES OF DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY FROM ASIA



**Ammar Bahadur Air**  
Sahakarmi Samaj

Ammar Bahadur Air is the founding member of Sahakarmi Samaj and has been with the organization since 1997. Since 2017, Ammar has held the position of Executive Director. As a pioneer of the Facilitation for Empowerment and Social Transformation (FEST) approach, Ammar has been instrumental in organizing and empowering marginalized communities in Nepal. His expertise includes governance, community and organizational development, human resource management, monitoring and evaluation, and capacity development through a people-led approach. Ammar has conducted numerous training sessions nationally and internationally and authored several publications, including the 'Community Facilitators Guide.' He is also actively affiliated with various national and international networks advocating for human rights. He holds a Master's degree in Community Development from Future Generation University in Virginia America and Sociology from Tribhuvan University Nepal, whereas he completed Diploma in global leadership from Coady International Institute, Francis Xavier University, Canada.



**Micheline Rama**  
The Asia Foundation  
Philippines

Micheline Rama is a Social and Behavior Change Specialist at The Asia Foundation and a professor at Ateneo de Zamboanga University. She is also the co-founder and former Executive Director of DAKILA, a collective dedicated to social transformation through creative activism. With over a decade of experience, Michelle excels as a strategist, campaign manager, creative director, and educator. Her expertise spans social behavior change, design thinking, movement building, advocacy campaigning, and creative activism. She has a proven track record in communications and social impact campaigns. Michelle holds an MSc in Social and Public Communication, Psychological and Behavioural Science from The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), where she was a Chevening Scholar.



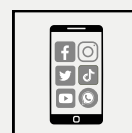
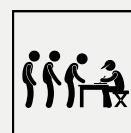
**Davaasuren Chuluunbat**  
Mongolia Marketing  
Consulting Group

Mr. Davaasuren is the Director of Development Policy at the Mongolia Marketing Consulting Group (MMCG). He also serves as the Chairperson of the Board for the Mongolian Marketing Research Association. Under his leadership, the MMCG team worked with Dr. Fishkin from Stanford's Deliberative Democracy Lab to run the first deliberative polling organized in Ulaanbaatar. Mr. Davaasuren also serves as a consultant and has provided methodological advice to the Parliament Secretariat, National Statistics Office of Mongolia and the Asia Foundation, Mongolia during Mongolia's inaugural national deliberative polling on constitutional changes.



**Sam Chittick**  
(Moderator)  
The Asia Foundation

Sam Chittick has been the Country Representative for the Philippines since July 2017, overseeing The Asia Foundation's programming in economic growth, justice and rule of law, peace and development, and governance. He leads a team across Manila, Cotabato, and Zamboanga, engaging with various partners. With over twenty years of experience, including roles with the World Bank and UN and organizations across fourteen countries, Sam specializes in governance and decentralization; peace, security, and conflict; local economic development; human rights, and the rule of law. He holds a Master's in International and Community Development from Deakin University and a Bachelor's in Economics from Sydney University.



## PANEL 14: LEGACIES OF COVID-19 GOVERNANCE AND IMPACTS ON CIVIC FREEDOMS

Hosted by: International Center for Not-For-Profit Law

**Date:** 23 August 2024  
**Time:** 3:30 PM – 5 PM  
**Venue:** Gallery 1-2, 36/F

### Abstract

The world is ready to move on from the COVID-19 pandemic, but does it still affect our lives? During the pandemic, authorities across Asia used a wide range of measures to limit the spread of the C19 virus. These measures impacted civic space, placing restrictions on people's ability to gather, protest, and access or share information. Over four years after the world slowed down, we are examining how pandemic-related measures have altered civic space and how civil society can respond to this new operating environment. A panel of researchers who tracked measures that restricted civic freedoms during the pandemic will share key insights on the legacies of the pandemic on civic space, including how state and non-state actors can better protect civic freedoms in future emergency situations.



## PANEL 14: LEGACIES OF COVID-19 GOVERNANCE AND IMPACTS ON CIVIC FREEDOMS



**Prashant Singh**

Research Consultant

Prashant is a legal researcher based in Bangalore, India. His academic work focuses on civic freedoms, citizenship law and SOGIESC issues. His writings have been published in academic journals as well as various media platforms. He has worked as a consultant with intergovernmental organisations like the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank and civil society organisations at the national, regional and international levels including Intersex Asia, GATE, the International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law, Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), ILGA World. He completed his undergraduate law degree from Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law, Punjab and graduate legal studies from Jindal Global Law School. In 2021, he received the Erasmus Mundus Scholarship to study M.A. Programme in Human Rights Policy and Practice at the University of Gothenburg (Sweden), the University of Deusto (Spain), the University of Roehampton (UK), and the University of Tromsø (Norway).



**Meghna Sharm**

Research Consultant

Recipient of the CEU Master's Excellence Scholarship, she holds an LLM in International Human Rights Law from Central European University, Vienna, and a BA LL.B. (Hons.) from Rajiv Gandhi National University, Punjab. She currently works as an Assistant Professor at the School of Law, RV University. Meghna's professional journey is marked by consistent research and advocacy on a range of human rights issues. She has been associated with the International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL), GATE, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, ILGA Asia, Forum Asia, Centre for Civil Society, and India's largest disability organization- the National Centre for Promotion of Employment of Persons with Disabilities. As a Research Consultant with ICNL, she has been working on the COVID Civic Freedom Monitor for the last three years. Her work involved monitoring and analyzing civic freedom violations across the Asia-Pacific region, identifying patterns and issues to better understand and address these infringements.



**Kirana Anjani**

ASEAN Parliamentarians  
for Human Rights

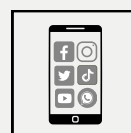
Kirana is an early-career professional specialising in democracy, and civic freedom in Southeast Asia. She demonstrates strong strategic planning and relationship-building skills, having worked with parliamentarians, civil society organizations, and other institutions across the region, and beyond. She is committed to fostering multi-stakeholder alliances to tackle regional human rights and political challenges. In her personal time, Kirana enjoys the company of her feline and plant companions.



**Lily Liu  
(Moderator)**

International Center  
for Not-for-Profit Law

Lily works closely with the Africa regional team to support partners in drafting, analysing, and navigating laws and policies related to CSOs and the non-profit sector. Lily also manages the Country Notes project in collaboration with the Council on Foundations, to facilitate U.S. funders to make grants globally. Lily is a graduate of the Georgetown University Law Center (JD) and Georgetown University (BA). She is a member of the District of Columbia Bar.



## PANEL 15: NAVIGATING AND RECLAIMING CIVIC SPACES: STRATEGIES, SUPPORT, AND CASE STUDIES FROM ASIA AND BEYOND

Hosted by: Asia Centre

**Date:** 23 August 2024

**Time:** 3:30 PM – 5 PM

**Venue:** Gallery 3, 36/F

### Abstract

In an era where civic spaces are increasingly constrained, civil society actors face severe obstacles to their work. This panel discussion will provide a multifaceted exploration of how civil society can resist and reverse these restrictions, drawing on a range of case studies and strategies from different global contexts.

The first presentation will focus on "Holding the Space: Civil Society Strategies to Resist and Reverse Civic Space Restrictions". Drawing from a two-year research study by forumZFD, it aims to share effective strategies for countering restrictions on civic space, based on fieldwork in the Philippines and Kosovo. The analysis will cover both immediate protective measures and long-term strategies, emphasizing the roles of grassroots organizations, NGOs, and international partners. By examining the similarities and differences in strategies across contexts, this presentation will offer actionable insights for activists facing shrinking civic spaces globally.

The second presentation will address "Supporting Civil Society in Closing Spaces" through the lens of FHI 360's experiences. It will highlight three critical challenges faced by civil society in restrictive environments: building alliances, engaging constituencies, and leveraging digital tools. The discussion will provide practical recommendations for strengthening collaboration, maintaining community support, and utilizing technology to enhance advocacy efforts. This segment will emphasize how international organizations can adapt their support to meet the evolving needs of local activists and bolster their resilience.

The third presentation will delve into "Heterotopia in Post-Autonomous Hong Kong: The Other Space for a Dissident Singer's Bookstore Concert". This case study of Denise Ho, a prominent Cantopop singer and activist, will explore how celebrity activism intersects with state repression. Using Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia, the presentation will analyze Ho's attempts to continue her activism through an online bookstore concert despite severe political and social constraints. This examination will shed light on how spaces of resistance are redefined under authoritarian pressures and the transformative potential of creative activism.

Together, these presentations will provide a comprehensive understanding of the strategies and support mechanisms crucial for sustaining civic engagement in increasingly hostile environments. Attendees will gain valuable perspectives on practical responses to repression, the importance of international solidarity, and the innovative ways activists are redefining spaces of dissent.

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# PANEL DETAILS

## PANEL 15: NAVIGATING AND RECLAIMING CIVIC SPACES: STRATEGIES, SUPPORT, AND CASE STUDIES FROM ASIA AND BEYOND



Dr. Jeremy Liebowitz

FHI 360

Dr. Liebowitz is the Chief of Party for FHI 360's Civil Society Support Activity, a USAID-funded civil society project in Cambodia. Dr. Liebowitz is an experienced manager of civil society, governance and democracy programs, with 20 years working in transitional and fragile country contexts, including Myanmar, Uganda and Cambodia. Dr. Liebowitz has technical expertise in a range of thematic areas, including civil society, elections, parliament, political inclusion, and public opinion research. He holds doctoral and master's degrees in Political Science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and he received his B.A. in Social Studies from Harvard University.



Bishnu Sapkota

FHI 360

Bishnu has served with a number of international organizations in leadership roles over the past two decades. Currently, he works as the Chief of Party for USAID's Innovations for Social Accountability in Cambodia project with FHI 360. Previously, he served as Chief of Party for the USAID-funded Civil Society: Mutual Accountability Project in Nepal and Country Director of FHI 360 between 2016-2019. He worked as National Program Manager with UNDP/Nepal from 2014-2016, and for The Asia Foundation/Nepal as a Program Advisor from January 2009 to January 2014. He holds an MPhil from the University of Cambridge, UK. He was a Visiting Fellow at the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame, USA in 2011.



Dr. Steve K. L. Chan

Keimyung University

Steve taught at the Singapore Institute of Management University and Lingnan University in Hong Kong. He has also been a visiting research fellow at the Social Research Institute of Chulalongkorn University and the Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development at Chiang Mai University. He received his PhD from the University of Melbourne. His research interests encompass economic sociology, with a focus on ethnic minority and migrant worker studies, social movements, and the geopolitics of Southeast Asia.

Dr Charles NC Wong

Chinese University of  
Hong Kong

Charles NC WONG finished his Ph.D study in the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 2022. His research interstates cover political cultural, political behaviour, and state and society.



Lena Muhs

ForumZFD

Lena conducts applied peace research for conflict transformation projects in the Philippines. She holds a Bachelor degree in Liberal Arts and Sciences from University College Maastricht, the Netherlands, and a Master of Arts in International Law and Human Rights from the UN-mandated University for Peace in Costa Rica. Prior to her position with forumZFD, she worked in various human rights organizations including as human rights observer for human rights defenders under threat. She has published on extrajudicial killings, counterterrorism and human rights as well as indigenous self-determination.



Sanjay Gathia  
(Moderator)

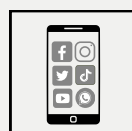
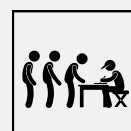
Before joining the Asia Centre, Sanjay was conducting online and in-person activities between India, Myanmar and Thailand, aimed at creating people-to-people (P2P) connectivity and networks for collaborations. These activities helped enhance cross-border networking, credible and quality information sharing, and fostering policy discussions and research collaborations. Over the past two decades, he has held senior positions in various sectors, including NGOs, corporate organizations, international NGOs, inter-governmental organizations and media, while engaging government institutions and election commissions in the Asia region. His contributions span organizational development, advocacy, capacity-building, strategy formulation, operational management, and fundraising. Sanjay's educational background includes an M.A. in Human Rights from Mahidol University in Thailand, a Post Graduate Diploma in Management with a specialization in Human Resources Management and Information Technology from Amity in India, and a B.A. in English (Hons.) from Delhi University.

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9TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

## SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE IN ASIA STORIES OF RESISTANCE AND PUSHBACK

21 - 23 AUGUST 2024 - BANGKOK, THAILAND





## PANEL 16: A NEW DAWN FOR BANGLADESH: SUCCESS OF THE STUDENT MOVEMENT

Hosted by: University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh

**Date:** 23 August 2024

**Time:** 3:30 PM – 5 PM

**Venue:** Gallery 4, 36/F

### Abstract

After several weeks of intense student protest, Bangladesh is now free once again. Bangladesh. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has stepped down from office, ending 15 years of what the opposition says was “authoritarian rule” and sparking celebrations across the country. On August 5, she left the country and is now in India awaiting asylum in the UK. Tens of thousands of people have taken to the streets for the past few weeks demanding her ouster. This panel delves into the socio-political situation in Bangladesh that brought about the downfall of the Prime Minister. It presents the vision for the country of the student movement and the challenges to fulfil this vision. It also tackles what the international community can do to help this new dawn for Bangladesh.

#### *Part 1: The Student Movement and the Fall of Sheikh Hasina*

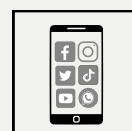
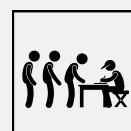
There will be two presentations under this section. The first is an analysis of student movements in the country and the missteps of the government in dealing with the movement, which eventually led to its downfall. The second is a personal account of the past few weeks – how students led, how faculty participated, and how the whole population joined in to express solidarity.

#### *Part 2: The Vision of a New Bangladesh*

There will be two presentations under this section. The first is a discussion about the vision, goals and values of the students – as embodied in their movement – regarding the country. What were their demands? What are the values they espoused? How do they see the country's direction? The second is a presentation on the challenges in reaching the new vision for the country. It's sure to be remembered that this is the second liberation of Bangladesh – the first one was in 1971. The aspirations of the youth then are like the goals and desires now. But somehow, these aspirations did not push through given the military dictatorships, failed democracies and authoritarianism that followed.

#### *Part 3: The Support of the International Community*

There will only be one presentation under this section. It will discuss ways in which the international community can help sustain freedoms in the country; and how the hopes and dreams of the youth can be fulfilled. There are several initiatives being undertaken at the moment such as Community Digital Storytelling (to hear the voices of marginalized groups), the Dhaka International Mobile Film Festival (to provide a platform for filmmakers with little resources to showcase their films), and the Curriculum Integration Program (to help students create various types of projects to highlight relevant socio-political themes).



# PANEL DETAILS

## PANEL 16: A NEW DAWN FOR BANGLADESH: SUCCESS OF THE STUDENT MOVEMENT



Dr. Sarkar Barbaq  
Quarmal  
University of Liberal Arts  
Bangladesh

He completed his undergraduate and graduate studies in Mass Communication at the University of Rajshahi and earned his PhD from Ibaraki University, Japan. Before joining ULAB in September 2013, Dr Quarmal worked as a post-doctoral researcher at Ibaraki University. His recent contributions include the Bangladesh chapter in the SAGE International Encyclopedia of Mass Media and Society\*, leading the first baseline survey on MIL among adolescents and youth, co-authoring \*Gender Representation in Bangladeshi Media and its Influence on Youth, and formulating a white paper on OTT regulations in Bangladesh. His research interests focus on ICT in Communication and Development, Media Studies, Digital Journalism, New Media, and Social Network Analysis.



Dr. Muhammad  
Abdul Kader  
University of Liberal Arts  
Bangladesh

He completed his undergraduate studies in Lens-based Media at the University of Sunderland and his graduate degree in Media Arts and Mass Communication at the University of Bedfordshire, UK, later earning a PhD in Fine Arts from the University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh. Dr Kader, a documentary filmmaker, has had his work showcased in the UK, USA, and Bangladesh. His documentary Tale of Market-2010 focused on the 2010 Share Market collapse in Bangladesh. He co-edited Revisiting Anwar Hossain's '71, a visual anthology by Anwar Hossain, revisiting people and places from Bangladesh's Liberation War. He also co-authored a white paper on OTT regulations in Bangladesh. His research interests include film studies, film aesthetics, representations of Bangladesh's Liberation War in film, and using film as a tool for voicing marginalised communities.



Syeda Sadia Mehjabin  
University of Liberal Arts  
Bangladesh

She has completed her postgraduate from Coventry University with a Course Tutor's Prize. Being the advisor of the Dhaka International Mobile Film Festival, she conducts workshops on mobile filmmaking for both school and college students and marginalized communities. Besides her expertise in mobile filmmaking, she is also a program present at a reputed private news channel. Her research interests include Orientalism, Hijab, Patriarchal Society, Ethnographic research, Muslim feminism, Citizen Journalism, Impact of social media in Identity Construction, particularly in topics such as psychoanalysis, fourth look, dispositions, power, and control. Her research subject expands in the theory of critical thinking, developing communication through creative media, knowledge, and culture.



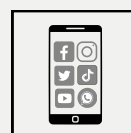
Nandita Tabassum Khan  
University of Liberal Arts  
Bangladesh

Her research interests include Communication, Culture and Film Studies. Her recent works include a one-year fellowship from the Swedish Development Cooperation on Media Development in Democratic Framework. She conducted the research in the Bangladesh team. The report advocates the structure for self-regulation in the digital media landscape to strengthen the ethical practice of the media. Her works also focus on the hate speech narratives in Bangladeshi local dailies, the construction of national culture in Bangladeshi commercial cinema, narratives of gender stereotypes in Bangladeshi Film Songs. Along with these, she won a fellowship grant from the Bangladesh Film Archive, Information Ministry to publish a research book on representation of Baul Saint Lalan Shai in Bengali Cinema.









Prof. Jude William  
Genilo (Moderator)  
University of Liberal Arts  
Bangladesh

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