



# Asian Center for the Progress of Peoples

1/F, 52 Princess Margaret Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong  
Tel: (852) 2714 5123 Fax: (852) 2712 0152 E-mail: hotline@acpp.org Web: www.acpp.org

**HOTLINE ASIA**

## Urgent Appeals Update 2010:3

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In the middle of the year, let us pray for justice and well-being of the peoples around Asia-Pacific.

In Southeast Asia, while the Philippines has finally accomplished the general elections with lots of cautions from the civil society, people are still looking forward to genuine change in the society. In Burma, the first general election in 20 years will be held, with date still unknown. It is worrying whether the election organized by the military regime will be free and fair. Next to Burma, although the protestors, known as "Red Shirts", have been dispersed, Thailand is yet to fully recover from the political conflicts. May all the Thai people work hand in hand to reconcile and relieve the anger throughout the country.

In East Asia, security was alarmed when proof was discovered that the corvette of South Korea was sunk by North Korea. Opposite to the peninsula, the political instability in Japan is emerging when former Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama resigned after an outcry against the postponed removal of the United States military bases in Okinawa. In Hong Kong, people commemorated the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of June 4<sup>th</sup> Massacre as usual, but the recent suppression by the local authorities has proved to be escalating as 2 statues of Goddess of Democracy were confiscated by police few days before the commemoration day.

In solidarity with people struggling against structural violence in different contexts, let us be the messengers of Justice and Peace by raising people's awareness of their struggle.

Some coming Justice and Peace events to note are:

World Refugee Day – 20 June 2010

International Day in Support of Torture Victims – 26 June 2010

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### UA100324(4) - INDIA **Safeguard Agrarian Sector and Rich Biodiversity**

Soon after the moratorium on introduction of Bt Brinjal was announced in February 2010, the Ministry of Science and Technology, proposed the Biotechnology Regulatory Authority of India (BRAI) Bill, which if passed, will undermine civilians' freedom to obtain the information on genetically modified organisms (GMOs). The proposed Bill would violate civilians' constitutional rights guaranteed by the Right to Information Act 2005, as anyone who criticizes GMOs will be in danger of imprisonment.

According to a public survey conducted by an independent market research agency, GfK Mode, 89% of the interviewees said that they had the right to protest or reject government's decision on GM foods. Moreover, 80% of them demanded an impartial, independent government agency to test and certify GM crops and 78% wanted all information on GM food prior to the approval of GM crops.

Regarding Bt Brinjal, although the Minister of Environment and Forest (MoEF), Jairam Ramesh has deferred introduction of Bt brinjal indefinitely until "independent tests prove it safe", the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) is trying other ways to push the introduction forward. Soon after GEAC took up the issue on 12 May 2010, its co-chairperson, Arjula Reddy, has ruled out the possibility of additional safety tests on Bt Brinjal, saying "there is no question of any decision on additional tests unless made mandatory by the country's testing protocol." Instead, GEAC decided to prepare a background paper on concerns over food safety of Bt Brinjal. A panel with 5-6 independent scientists will be formed to look into the concerns and question their scientific validity.

To avert any measures which may degrade the standard of GMO regulation, such as the BRAI Bill, *ACPP* issued *UA100324(4)* on 24 March 2010.

*Sources: Hindustan Times, the Indian, Green Peace*

### UA100121(1) - INDIA

### Stop Intimidation of Human Rights Workers and Uphold Rights of Indigenous Community

It is finally confirmed that Himanshu Kumar, whose personal safety was under imminent threat, has been forced out of Chhattisgarh around mid-January, after being falsely charged of abducting a tribal woman.

"The police themselves abducted her and they're accusing me", Himanshu explained his situation in an interview with the Radio Netherlands Worldwide. Himanshu was arrested by police on 3 January 2010 when he was on the way to hospital, driving the tribal woman who was attacked in the Salwa Judum Campaign.

Himanshu has forced to leave the Adivasi communities in Chhattisgarh where he has been working for 17 years. He still keeps in contact with the people he used to work with but cannot return to the communities he used to serve. "It's so painful, I feel disturbed, I feel lost. They trusted me to help them and I feel I've left them when they most need me," Himanshu said. To continue his work outside the district, Himanshu goes from city to city in India, trying to plead the cause of the tribals of Dantewada.

Himanshu, along with his colleagues at Vanvasi Chetna Ashram, has been under threat since he was labeled by the Salwa Judum Campaign in 2005 as “Naxalite”, or communist group, for providing rehabilitation to people in need, regardless of their political background. To raise international attention to prevent Himanshu from the imminent arbitrary arrest, ACPP issued UA100121(1) in January 2010.

*Source: Radio Netherlands Worldwide*

#### **UA090330(1) – CHINA Release Gao Zhisheng and Other Rights Defenders**

Since Gao Zhisheng, a Chinese human rights lawyer, disappeared on 4 February 2009, he suddenly reappeared on 29 March 2010. It is reported that he has spoken to Western journalists, returned to his home in Beijing and visited his father-in-law in Urumqi, Xinjiang, around mid-April. However, his whereabouts became a mystery again as his friends could not contact him anymore since 20 April. Gao has been sentenced for "committing the crime of subverting state power", however, details of the charges and public hearing have yet to be provided so far.

When British Foreign Secretary David Miliband visited China in March 2010, he raised Gao's case with Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi, saying “the widespread concern about it [Gao's case] is an example of the global social conscience that increasingly exists.” In response, Foreign Minister Yang insisted on the integrity of the criminal justice and judicial procedures that exist in China.

Gao and his family has been under harassment for taking up politically sensitive cases. To call for the Chinese government to release Gao Zhisheng and stop harassing human rights defenders, ACPP issued UA090330(1) in March 2009.

#### **Sources:**

*South China Morning Post, Human Right in China*

### **ADVERTISEMENT**

**Training workshop** in July and August, the ACPP will be running a series of experiential learning workshops on justice and peace actions in Hong Kong. The series will be composed of 2 Parts:

1. *Orientation Workshops on justice and peace work*  
3 and 10 July 2010 (Saturdays)
2. *Justice & Peace Skills Workshops*  
Date to be decided, based on issues taken up

For more information, please visit the ACPP website:  
[www.acpp.org/training/jpws2010.html](http://www.acpp.org/training/jpws2010.html)

### **Publications on Request**

#### **Justice and Peace Workers Bulletin, January - May, No. 1 2010**

- **A Silent Moment**

- **What's Going on in Asia**

*India:* JPC-Mumbai's Initiatives for Community-Building

*Japan:* Annual National Meeting of the JCCJP

*Pakistan:* New NCJP Regional Office in Lahore

*Philippines:* Church's Concerns and Response on the Upcoming Election

*Sri Lanka:* Reviving Christian Doctrine of Liberation; The International Women's Day 2010; The 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Fr. Mary Bastian's Martyrdom

*Thailand:* Love Each Other; Stop being Divided by Politics

- **Issues of Concern/Events**

Japanese Bishops Call for Total Abolition of Nuclear Weapons

Vedanta's Mining Project in Orissa

Political Reform in Hong Kong

MOGC's Reflection on Ecological Crisis

- **Justice and Peace Resources**

AI's Report on Migrant Workers in Malaysia

Right to Food Education Kits

Gwangju Asian Human Rights Folk School 2010

English Page of JCCJP's Website

- **JPW Exchange Corner**

Challenges to Human Rights Work

Update on *JPW Meeting 2010* in Cambodia

ACPP's *JPIC Gathering*

ACPP-Hotline Asia  
1/F, 52 Princess Margaret Road  
Kowloon, Hong Kong SAR

**Fax:** (852) 2712 0152 **Tel:** (852) 2714 5123

Email: [hotline@acpp.org](mailto:hotline@acpp.org)

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