



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The signatories REAFFIRM:

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

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

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

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

The signatories COMMIT to:

Defend and promote freedom of religion or belief as a universal, inalienable and non-derogable human right, as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in

international law and declarations, and in the work of national, regional, and global institutions.

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

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

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

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

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

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