



## **SocDem Asia Pacific Statement commemorating the International Day of Non-Violence**

2 October 2023

The Network for Social Democracy in Asia Pacific joins the world in celebrating the International Day of Non-Violence even more relevant as we see an upsurge in violence and civil strife across the globe.

We recognize the importance of this day which coincides with the birthday of Indian independence leader and advocate of active non-violence, Mahatma Gandhi. The importance of the legacy of his life should not be forgotten. As socialists, social democrats, and progressives, we must draw lessons from the movement he led as we pursue social and political change through the methods of active non-violence and thwart those forces which utilize violence in all its forms. Today, such movements are seeking to accumulate and consolidate power by employing violence against the most vulnerable and marginalized in our societies. As a movement deeply rooted in democracy, we must condemn the use of violence in all its forms. The use of violence is anathema to our democratic traditions and we also take note that our own movements have at one time or another been targets of political violence perpetrated by anti-democratic forces whether such violence was against organized labor, women, LGBT, young people, and other minorities.

We are deeply troubled that political and social violence have again resurfaced as part of mainstream discourse across the globe. Most especially countries in Asia are seeing a surge in violence perpetrated by state forces against their citizens. It is also disconcerting that war is regaining currency as a tool of subjugation. The crisis in Ukraine is a sobering warning even for us here in Asia. We are all too aware that such flashpoints also exist in South Asia and Southeast Asia where regional powers are flexing their might to the detriment of smaller nations. We must oppose such normalization of war and ensure that diplomacy and international law remain the prevailing means to resolve such conflicts.

It is incumbent on our movement to join fellow democrats across the globe to use the tools of international diplomacy and international law to deter those regimes that violate human rights. Clearly, we cannot allow those who wield inordinate amounts of power to escape accountability. Existing mechanisms under the United Nations and institutions such as the International Criminal Court must be strengthened to ensure they are effective in implementing their mandates.

It is also necessary that our political parties are at the forefront of addressing the structural roots of violence and institutional violence that exists today. Economic, social, political, and cultural factors for violence must be met with policy solutions that alter the relations and status between those that benefit from structural violence and those that are the targets of structural violence. This also means addressing the threat of the climate crisis and the growing economic insecurity that threatens to destroy social cohesion.

As we celebrate International Day of Non-Violence, we must learn from the lessons of non-violent struggles while also protecting their legacy and achievements. We cannot allow violence to become normalized in our political institutions or become tools of leaders to achieve power. Only democracy and non-violence are effective tools to address the myriad of social, political, and economic problems we face today.