

The **Multiple** **Faces** of **Civil Society** in **Southeast Asia**

by Isis International-Manila

Indeed, the ASEAN Civil Society Conference (ACSC) established its level of independence from its parallel organisation by allowing the event to take place at all—while the ASEAN itself opted to cancel its scheduled Leaders Summit, the ASEAN Civil Society pushed through with its conference, in spite of typhoons and rumored threats of terrorism. This dichotomy between the state-centered organisation and its NGO-focused sister-conference creates an easy binary between the “mainstream” and its “alternative,” defining the ASEAN Civil Society only as a counterpoint to the status quo. However, within the ASEAN Civil Society itself, one finds a diverse and nuanced picture of leftist perspectives in Southeast Asia.



The conference took place at Montebello Villa Hotel, Cebu, Philippines in December 10-12, 2006.

Nadine Navarro

Conference participants wait for the first plenary on "Addressing the **Democratic Deficit** in Southeast Asia"



Joralen Wenceslao

A diverse panelists of the last plenary talked about "**The Way Forward** for Civil Society in ASEAN."

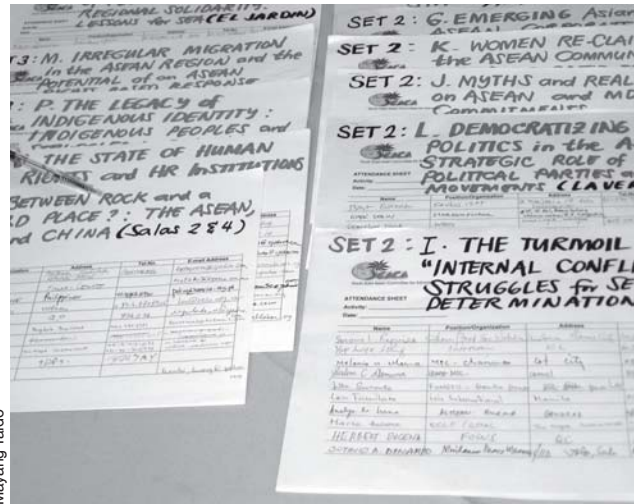


Mayang Taldo



Joralein Wenceslao

Participants register for workshops on various topics. Several smaller roundtable discussions were held – of topics on trade, agriculture, democracy, human rights, communication rights, labour, migration, gender, **among others.**



Mayang Taldo



A panel on **"Barriers to Access to Information, Knowledge and Communication Rights in Southeast Asia,"** is led by (from left to right) Rajjeli Nicole (Isis International-Manila), Loraine Gallabayan (The Access Initiative-Philippines), Roby Alampay (South East Asian Press Alliance), and Al Alegre (Foundation for Media Alternatives).



Nadine Navarro

Workshop participants listen intently to the panel on **"The Turmoil Within: 'Internal' Conflicts and struggles for Self Determination in Southeast Asia."**



Khin Ohmar of the Burmese Women's Union as she shares her experience during the workshop on "Women Re-claiming the ASEAN Community as a Democratic Project" which clearly depicts how ASEAN is turning a blind eye on the atrocities done against Burmese women.



Nadine Navarro

A list to start an **email discussion group** on topics related to free trade agreements in Southeast Asia is being circulated among participants.



Statements critiquing the ASEAN's theme, "A Caring and Sharing Community," from the Asia Pacific Solidarity Coalition, a regional group started in May 2004 aimed at promoting **genuine justice** and human rights in the Southeast Asian and Pacific regions.



The International League of Peoples' Struggle, an anti-imperialist organisation dedicated to the **social liberation** of oppressed and exploited countries.



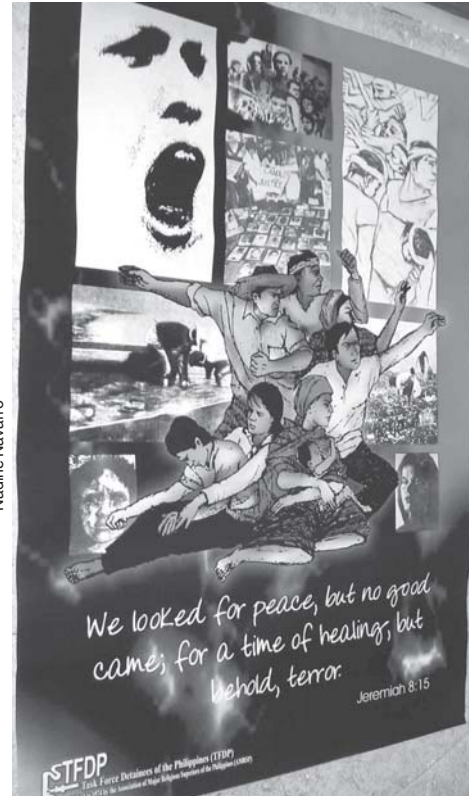
The rhetoric of participating organisations wallpapered the hotel. The banner of Jubilee South, an international anti-debt network focused on the Global South, reads, "No Peace, No Justice Under Debt and Domination."



Free pamphlets on farmers' rights from the Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in rural Asia.



A letter to President Macapagal-Arroyo, asking her to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court; which would help prosecute those who commit crimes against humanity.



Nadine Navarro

"We looked for peace, but no good came; for a time of healing, but behold, terror," reads the Task Force Detainees of the Philippines poster. The organisation works for the release of political prisoners and helps send their children to school.

