

Christian Conference of Asia

**International Consultation on
Combatting Human Trafficking, Forced Migration, and Cybercrime in Asia**

13-15 August | Bangkok, Thailand

Communiqué

We, the 35 delegates from over 15 countries across Asia, representing churches, ecumenical councils, grassroots migrant organisations and non-government organisations, gathered in an international consultation to discuss the growing and worsening humanitarian crisis of forced migration and human trafficking in the region, with an aim to develop the church's proactive responses to protect vulnerable populations, uphold the dignity and rights of victims, and combat human trafficking, forced migration, and cybercrimes.

During the three-day consultation, we discussed the social, economic, and political factors that force millions of people to leave their families, communities, and homelands. From economic insecurity, underdevelopment, and widening inequalities to political conflicts, human rights violations, militarisation, and climate change, countless people in Asia are displaced, often finding themselves in vulnerable, inhumane conditions and at heightened risk of trafficking and exploitation.

We deepened our understanding of the emergence and expansion of highly organised and lucrative cybercrimes in Asia, operated by transnational criminal syndicates who deceive and recruit thousands of individuals from Asia, Africa, and other countries under fraudulent promises of employment and high wages. We learned about the inhumane and harsh conditions in which victims are forced to live in camps and cybercrime operation centres across Southeast Asia. The victims of human trafficking and forced migration, primarily from various Asian countries and Africa, are subjected to forced criminality, labour exploitation, violence, and abuse, often targeted specifically by these organised cybercrime syndicates. We also learned about the ongoing challenges faced by NGOs and institutions, advocates, law enforcement agencies, and authorities of different governments in combatting increased human trafficking and cybercrimes.

Throughout the consultation, biblical-theological reflections reminded faith leaders of the gospel's call to uphold human dignity, which demands both pastoral ministry and prophetic witness. Drawing on biblical and theological undergirding and affirmations, we were reminded that churches are uniquely positioned to offer their voice and extend various forms of support to trafficked persons in distress.

Human history is replete with narratives of migration. The narratives found in the Old Testament testify to this reality. This migrant perspective — woven into both the story

of the Bible and the story of the human race — invites us to identify deeply with migrants. These stories highlight the vulnerabilities of migrants and include divine commands to show special care for the foreigner and the sojourner.

The New Testament continues to reflect the difficult situations faced by migrants. The narratives of the Holy Family, of Jesus and his disciples, and of the early Church are marked by movement and displacement. The parable of the Good Samaritan centres on people in transit and vulnerability, reminding us to stand with migrants in times of crisis.

Thus, biblical teachings and Christian values provide an imperative for us to address the challenges of migration and human trafficking.

While we recall the ongoing commitment of CCA member churches and councils in journeying with migrants, refugees, internally displaced, and stateless people, we recognise that our efforts remain inadequate and incomplete. We are reminded that we must continue to evolve in our response to trafficked persons who are coerced into participating in escalating cybercrimes and subjected to exploitation.

We affirm that:

- the inherent dignity and human rights of all migrants and trafficked persons must be protected, upheld, and defended;
- our faith calls us to promote and protect the rights of all those who are victimised, and to demonstrate compassion, mercy, and justice to all migrants, and those trafficked and forced to engage in cybercrimes, who suffer oppression, exploitation, discrimination, and persecution;
- churches are called to listen to the voices of migrants, accompany and support them throughout their vulnerabilities and their struggle for justice, and join them on their journey of healing and empowerment;
- forced migration and human trafficking are grave injustices and denials of human rights, deeply rooted in fundamental inequalities, and their root causes must be addressed.

We urge and encourage CCA member churches, national councils, and other ecumenical partners to:

- conduct awareness-building campaigns in every congregation and local community on forced migration, human trafficking, and increasing level of cybercrime;
- initiate local and national-level ministries to prepare pastors and lay leaders to support victims of human trafficking and forced migration, including those caught up in cybercrime camps, and respond to their needs for wellbeing and survival, such as psychosocial counselling, shelter, food, and transportation;

- capacitate and equip clergy and lay leaders with the knowledge and sensitivity required to identify and respond to all forms of human trafficking and systemic drivers of forced migration;
- actively support and collaborate with grassroots networks, survivor-led campaigns, and advocacy initiatives to combat human trafficking;
- encourage and support migrant workers, including those trafficked and placed in labour camps in Arabian Gulf countries and elsewhere, helping them to voice their concerns;
- forge national interfaith alliances and enhance collaboration and coordination to address various concerns and needs of victims of human trafficking and forced migration;
- enhance the capacities of local churches to coordinate with government agencies and officials, legal entities, and civil society organisations to respond to cases of human trafficking and forced cybercrime activities;
- call for stronger government interventions and practical applications to ensure regulations and accountability measures safeguard the dignity, rights, justice, and protection of all those who are persecuted and victimised due to human trafficking and forced cybercrime in Asia.