

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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The inauguration of the ASEAN Inter-Governmental Commission on Human Rights

Amnesty International urges the newly-established ASEAN Inter-Governmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) to act as a true human rights monitoring body by working effectively for the promotion and protection of human rights while preserving its own independence and impartiality, and applying international human rights law and standards.

Amnesty International is concerned that the selection process for the Commissioners in most member states lacked transparency, with human rights NGOs and the public as a whole being excluded, and decisions taken solely by government officials. On the other hand, in Indonesia and Thailand, open and inclusive selection processes and the appointment of dedicated human rights activists to represent these countries is a welcome development. Amnesty International hopes that all Commissioners maintain independence, impartiality and dedication to human rights, rather than represent narrow political interests.

Amnesty International calls on the AICHR to:

- Encourage and campaign for the ratification of all human rights treaties by member states;
- Develop ways of actively protecting human rights, such as providing accessibility to individual, group and NGO complaints, studying and publishing country and thematic reports, conducting country visits and putting in place a system of reports by states, to be submitted to the AICHR and discussed by it;
- Address the serious human rights violations in ASEAN, most notably the situation in Myanmar, but also violations of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights throughout the region;
- Act in an open and transparent way, and ensure meaningful interaction with human rights defenders and the public as a whole;
- Strictly apply international human rights law and standards in its work, and resist all attempts to develop regional instruments that have watered-down.

The establishment of an ASEAN human rights body is a welcome and long-overdue step forward, but it is up to the commissioners, as well as member states and ASEAN as a whole to ensure that this body develops into a true human rights protection and promotion mechanism. Amnesty International will seek to engage with the AICHR as well as monitor its work.

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