



# Members' Voices



- Interviews with Imtiaz Ahmed (Centre for Genocide Studies) & Muhammad Ilyas Yahprung (Ramkhamhaeng University)
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## Topic Background

Throughout the month of October, SEAN-CSO's campaign focused on the theme of Members' Voices. Our network consists of 126 organizations based throughout Southeast Asia in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Australia. These various institutions employ a diverse range of professionals with experience in policy making, research, education, social advocacy, activism, and more. Our goal this

month was to highlight some of these outstanding individuals and organizations and the ways in which they work to better the lives of those around them. The coronavirus pandemic has shown us the importance and power of collaborative efforts. Now more than ever it is important to come together, learn from each other, and continue to strive for a more just world.



## Profiles

### Imtiaz Ahmed

*Dr. Imtiaz Ahmed is a professor of International Relations and the director of the Center for Genocide Studies (CGS) and the University of Dhaka.*

One of CGS' biggest projects is the Bangladesh Peace Observatory (BPO), a major research facility within the center. As highlighted on their website, "BPO seeks to harness the power of Open Data to advance knowledge and understanding of peace and development in the country. The Bangladesh Peace Observatory brings together different streams of publicly available data on violence, analyses and visualizes them in a useful and interactive way for decision makers, civil society and media to understand, consume, and debate."

CGS and BPO work very closely with organizations from both the government and non-government sectors of society. In fact, there is an advisory group that consists of representatives from the Bangladesh Police, Bangladesh Military (National Defense College) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Daily Star (newspaper), Action Aid Bangladesh, Coalition Against Violence (NGO), and the Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD). The board regularly meets every three to four months and discusses the data.



Professor Ahmed explained that peace reports come in every two months and peace graphics come in every two weeks. They also have COVID-19 graphics that come in every two weeks. The COVID-19 graphics map the number of rumours, penalties, protests, symptoms, and deaths, related to the coronavirus. The government tracks COVID-19 deaths, but they don't map the various symptoms which come out of different hospitals from time to time. The patients might not all be COVID-19 positive, but some are. The BPO team can calculate the maximum number of people dying in Bangladesh because of COVID-19 by adding the government figures to their symptom data. Then they can be fairly sure of the maximum number of deaths and where people are dying.

This helps the government in many ways. Professor Ahmed emphasized that while quantitative is extremely useful, it does not tell the whole story. He said, "I am drawn to micro-narratives. We at CGS collect micro-narratives or life stories and then we cluster them. When we gather quantitative data, we uncover some themes and findings that are difficult to understand in the abstract. So we train students and send them to collect narratives. Once they get a cluster, we then match the narratives with the data that we already have. Once the analysis is done, backed by the micro narratives, we are quite comfortable with our outcomes. Micro-narratives are something we take very seriously."

## Muhammad Ilyas Yahprung (Ramkhamhaeng University)

*Dr. Muhammad Ilyas Yahprung is a professor of Political Science in the Department of Governance at Ramkhamhaeng University (RU).*

Based in Bangkok, RU the largest public university in Thailand. Muhammad Ilyas is also involved with an Islamic civil society organization. His work focuses on facilitating interfaith dialogue between the Muslim and Buddhist communities in Thailand. The organization seeks to increase understanding among Muslims and Buddhists, particularly when there is tension between the two communities. Some of these tensions exist not only in Thailand, but also throughout Southeast Asia.

Muhammad Ilyas' work involves organizing a platform that encourages religious leaders to talk, share ideas, express their concern over various issues that their communities are dealing with. He explained that, "our main job is to provide a platform where this can occur. Additionally, we publish books and organize



seminars, and develop a curriculum that can be used in private Islamic schools. Our goal is to open minds and improve relations between different faith communities.”

For the past five years, he and the organization have focused on engaging religious leaders. Within the Buddhist community, they target religious leaders, monks, and academics, particularly those associated with an establishment or who hold Buddhist religious authority. Muhammad Ilyas explained that every Friday Muslims do the Jumma prayer/Friday prayer. After the prayer, the organization hosts a small forum where they invite Buddhist religious leaders to chat with them. They host one of these forums about once a month.

Muhammad Ilyas emphasized that due to a variety of external and internal factors tension between Buddhists and Muslims is unfortunately increasing. He believes it is important to address this tension now before things escalate. There are two big challenges to overcome. The first, “convincing the Muslim community that they can no longer be passive, but must actively and positively engage with other communities. The second, convincing the Buddhist community that in this modern world, the concept of equal citizenship is very useful and it will provide peace. Extreme ethno-religious nationalism will divide us more than it will bring us together.”





## Member Highlights

### Thuma Ko Kapaingud Service Organization Inc.

*from the Philippines*

Thuma Ko Kapagingud Service Organization Inc. (THUMA) is a non-profit, non-partisan, and non-governmental organization based in the Philippines. As highlighted on their website, THUMA is committed to “making socially-excluded youth and families valuable development players.” The organization envisions a community that develops from within its inherent resources and people.



*Thuma Lanao's invited to take part in the FGDs conducted in the Women Friendly Space. The event was a partnership with the Evident Marketing Consulting Group, Inc. and MMI supported by the UNFPA (source: <https://www.facebook.com/THUMA-1684720088493149/>)*

THUMA was founded by Khuzaimah Mangatem who currently serves as the organization's Executive Director. In 2017, Marawi City (Islamic City of Marawi) was the battleground for a five month long siege. The Philippine government and extremist militants faced off in the capital of Lanao del Sur. Mangatem created THUMA to coordinate aid efforts during the conflict. She and her team mapped out where civilians were fleeing to, specifically remote locations that were not necessarily included in the government databases.

Nowadays, THUMA partners with both government entities and private organizations in its execution of various projects. In June, THUMA collected and distributed personal protective equipment (PPE) to frontliners serving in the Rural Health Unit of Kauswagan. They delivered face shields, face masks, shoe covers, head covers, and gloves.

Overall, Mangatem and her team are committed to supporting socially excluded youth; young people who have not received a formal education or benefited from community initiatives. She recognizes that youth are the best candidates for identifying problems and developing solutions within their communities. By supporting this neglected demographic, THUMA reduces the number of young people who fall prey to the promises of violent extremists.



*Thuma staff and personnel during the orientation on the survey to be conducted for the Socially Excluded Youth in Madalum (source: <https://www.facebook.com/THUMA-1684720088493149/>)*

## Gabungan Bertindak Malaysia (GBM Coalition)

*from Malaysia*

Gabungan Bertindak Malaysia is a coalition of 27 NGOs, united and committed to the goal of addressing critical issues and challenges facing 21st Century Malaysia. Founded in 2011, the coalition organizes programs, workshops, and talks that promote unity, preserve culture, and emphasize the importance of developing educational and technical skills.



image source: <https://www.facebook.com/Gabungan-Bertindak-Malaysia-GBM-163726347067478/>

The organizations that make up GBM advocate for and work towards reform in 15 main areas: good governance, politics, judiciary, federalism, local government, public services, economics, environment, education, women's rights, Indigenous peoples' rights, culture, religion, media, and national unity. As highlighted on their Facebook page, "with the expressed objective of striving towards a better Malaysia for its peoples, the theme of GBM, 'From Discord to Harmony' encapsulates the monumental challenges and overwhelming commitments that lie ahead. It will also be a celebration of the human spirit, in expressing our constitutional rights as citizens of a nation moving forward towards the ideal of an inclusive nation that is founded on justice and fairness."

Like many other organizations, GBM has had to find ways to engage with their community online. Recently, the coalition held a webinar

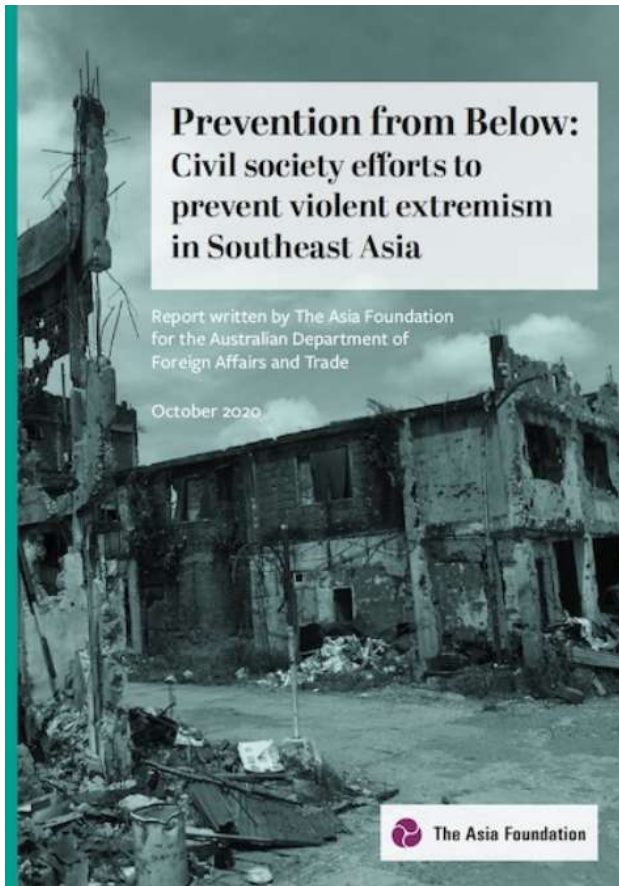
titled: "New Norms, New Forms: Political Stability in a Time of Covid." This webinar featured Professor Tajuddin Rasdi (UCSI University), Dr. Gurdial Singh Nijar (President of HAKAM/National Human Rights Society), and Professor Wong Chin Huat (Sunway University). In a press release about GBM's 9th Annual General Meeting (AGM), Zaid Kamaruddin, the former Chair of GBA highlighted that "GBM adopts a collaborative and inclusive approach where the common interest is utmost and specific needs of each attended to. He stressed that diversity is a strength to be harnessed for the good of each of us in the society." He also emphasized that "the GBM Model, in which all issues are seen Malaysian issues and not issues of specific communities, could be a way forward."



image source: <https://www.facebook.com/Gabungan-Bertindak-Malaysia-GBM-163726347067478/>



## Report to Read



Preventing violent extremism is typically seen as a task for government security agencies, and yet civil society organizations also play a vital role. From community networks operating at the grassroots to policy research institutes, non-governmental groups have unparalleled advantages in reaching marginalized groups and supporting effective, locally defined responses.

***What are the most effective ways of supporting civil society efforts to prevent violent extremism across Southeast Asia?***

Read more:

[bit.ly/SEANCSO-AFPublication](https://bit.ly/SEANCSO-AFPublication)

## How to make a self-recorded video:



Want to be exclusively featured on SEAN-CSO's Social Media? We want to hear more from you, especially in these pandemic times. You can talk about interesting projects that you're currently involved in, how the pandemic has affected your work or organization in the field, or anything related to P/CVE issues.

Still don't know how to make a good video? Don't worry, we have got your back. We have created this simple 2-minute tutorial on how to make a decent self-recorded video in your own home. Stream it online on YouTube:

[bit.ly/SelfRecTutorial](https://bit.ly/SelfRecTutorial)



## Funding Opportunity

Grant Initiative on Sport and its Values as a Tool to Prevent Violent Extremism

▶ [bit.ly/SEAN-CSO-UNICRI](https://bit.ly/SEAN-CSO-UNICRI)

Racial Equity 2020

▶ [bit.ly/SEAN-CSO-RE](https://bit.ly/SEAN-CSO-RE)

United Nations Democracy Fund

▶ [bit.ly/SEAN-CSO-UNDF](https://bit.ly/SEAN-CSO-UNDF)

Creating Hope in Conflict

▶ [bit.ly/SEAN-CSO-HGC](https://bit.ly/SEAN-CSO-HGC)

## Updates

● SEAN-CSO currently *has*



**126**  
members

● All SEAN-CSO social media is *followed by*

**4,281** accounts

● SEAN-CSO posts focused on PVE *receive*



an average  
**16,026** likes

## Follow us

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Also check our website:



[sean-cso.org](https://sean-cso.org)

## Synergy in Harmony

Walk together for a better world



**Would you like to be featured in the next SEAN-CSO Newsletter or in our upcoming social media campaign?**

If you have stories, research, or programs focused on Preventing or Countering Violent Extremism, contact us at:

*This update has been brought to you by SEAN-CSO in collaboration with Peace Generation Indonesia.*

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