



Net IPR

Network for International Protection of Refugees
 Cotact Address(*): 18 Shannon Place, Adelaide SA 5000, Australia

10 December 1998.

Grass-roots Human Rights Network for the Protection of Refugees within Asia-Pacific Region, including Australia

Name: The Network for International Protection of Refugees (Net IPR)

Structure: (#)

Patrons: Sr Janet Mead

Chairperson: The Rev'd Martin Chittleborough

Secretary: Dr U Ne Oo

Treasurer: Salai Nilian

Executive Members: Danny Connell, David Mathieson, Scott Litchfield, Juan Garrido

Members: (not listed)

Object: The Network will primarily campaign for displaced persons to receive international protection in accordance with UN refugee conventions. The Network will study the root causes of the refugee movements in Asia-Pacific region as well as the policy responses by the governments of the region and international agencies.

The Network will function purely as a refugee advocacy network, in contrast to the refugee support network/groups. It will take interest in the matters of protecting human rights of the refugees and displaced persons. The Network will not be involved in matters such as the individual casework of refugee. It will not be engaged in resettlement/sponsorship of refugees to Australia. It will primarily be devoted to responding to government policies, including that of Australia, with regard to the refugees and displaced persons.

Though the Network is not intended to function as a refugee support network, it will however be engaged in advocating governments for humanitarian support to the refugees and displaced persons. For example, the network may advocate the governments to provide humanitarian support to a group of refugees or displaced persons within the region.

The Network is intended to function at the grassroots level with the longer-term aim of providing solutions to the problems of refugees and displaced people. Since refugee problems essentially are human rights problems with political roots, the policy coordination between the professional human rights organizations (such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch) and solidarity groups can be beneficial to solving refugee problems. The Network will be autonomous and independent in its operation, and will not take any political position on issues beyond the stated objectives.

Assessment for the need: Currently, organization such as 'Coalition for Asylum-Seekers' have been doing the advocacy for protection of refugees in Australia. The Network will have similar aim in advocating for refugees and displaced persons within the Asia-Pacific region. In addition, the Network will explore and advocate, whenever possible, for a solution to refugee and displaced people problems.

There has been a vacuum for grassroots advocacy as regards international protection of refugees and displaced people. Although the protection of the human rights of refugees will generally fall within the mandate of organizations such as Amnesty International, it is not always the case that AI can act. A locally based grassroots group, with more autonomy and wider political mandate is more appropriate in advocating for the refugees.

The ethnic solidarity groups and community organizations often are not in the best position to act upon refugee protection cases. Most ethnic solidarity groups often work closely with governments concerning refugees. They can become dependent upon governments. Therefore, the solidarity groups are not a good platform to start with as regards international protection of refugees.

Therefore, an independent grassroots network focusing on international protection of refugees can make a valuable contribution to this end.

Membership: Individuals, social justice and human rights groups, and international solidarity organizations are invited to join the Network. There will be two types of membership: The executive and ordinary membership.

The executive member can be either an individual or a group; and must be based in Adelaide, South Australia. The executive members shall be responsible for setting the agenda of the campaign.

Ordinary members can also be individuals or groups, and may reside interstate or overseas. The ordinary members will have the benefit of having a South Australian based organization, readily linked with them and working on issues in the interest of refugees. Ordinary members may also make input in setting agenda for the campaign.

Both executive and ordinary members are to be involved in writing letters to governments and international agencies. All members will receive the newsletter.

Campaign resources: To carry out a campaign, the Network will require information concerning refugees and displaced persons within the Asia-Pacific region. The executive members may do research on the issue or may solicit materials from other human rights organizations and solidarity groups.

Procedure for campaigning: Campaign will mainly involve letter writing to governments and international agencies, such as the United Nations. Any of the executive members may initiate a campaign of their interest. Firstly, the member may collect the relevant and accurate information regarding matters of concern. If the executive member decided to act upon the information, say writing to a government, they must (1) inform the Secretary and (2) write an embargoed draft letter which should be sent out to all executive members for their opinion. The executive members may respond to the initiative. No response will be considered as the approval. Any executive member may write on behalf of the network. The executive members may act on anything that deems to fall within the objectives of the Network.

Term and operation of the Network: Tentatively assumed the term to be (2) to (2 1/2) years. Campaign should be financed solely by public or membership support. Financial support from governments will not be accepted. All positions within the Network will be voluntary. Support is needed for photocopying and mailing. If the Network would like to extend to an Internet based operation, one energetic volunteer will be required.

Meeting and Publications:

regular meeting: Executive members should meet twice a year.

other meeting: Anytime matters arise.

publication: hope to produce 2 Newsletters in a year.

Mailing and Photocopying support: Scott Litchfield, Cross Cultural Ministry Fieldworker, Uniting Church in Australia. (Any other groups offering support of this task would be greatly appreciated).

(*) Temporary contact address. (#) Executive membership are still pending expansion.