

Press Release

November 28, 2018

## **The Gusdurian Network Indonesia Receives the 2018 Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award**

The Taiwan Foundation for Democracy (TFD) announced today that the 2018 Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award will be awarded to the Gusdurian Network Indonesia (GNI).

GNI, a non-governmental organization dedicated to peace, pluralism, and fundamental human rights and values, is named after late Indonesian President KH Abdurahman Wahid, who was also known colloquially in Indonesia as Gus Dur.

President Wahid, who was also the former chair of Nahdatul Uleema (NU), the world largest Muslim organization, had worked to promote interfaith dialogue, multiculturalism, the consolidation of civil society, tolerance, democracy, and human rights.

The GNI was established in 2010 following the former president's death, as Gus Dur's lifelong work has become a source of reference and inspiration for thousands of people. It was founded to encourage the interaction and consolidation of network among those who share Gus Dur's beliefs and visions in Indonesia and around the world.

Adhering to Gus Dur's values, the GNI is for religious freedom, minority rights, and religious tolerance. The GNI has made meaningful interventions against discrimination by defending those that were victimized by the state and conflicts that arose due to religious and minority suppressions and via the organization's programs of peaceful inter-religious dialogue, legal advocacy, and legal defense.

As one of the leading organizations in combating radicalism and intolerance in Indonesia, the GNI is also active in alleviating and lessening potential communal conflicts in a society with religious and ethnic diversity.

Some of the recent activities undertaken by the GNI include urging



for a judicial review of draconian laws that discriminate by civil administration against believers (of non-officially-recognized religions) in Indonesia, pressuring the government to issue national ID cards to about 2,000 Ahmadiyah followers in Kuningan (West Java), and providing humanitarian support to the Shia Muslims in Sampang who became refugees due to the social unrest in their community. In 2017, Gusdurian also intervened in and braved the communal conflict in Aceh after the church attacks in Aceh Singkil, which ended with a peaceful declaration made by the parties in conflict. The GNI also organized a national campaign against blasphemy prosecution towards Basuki Tjahya Purnama (AHOK), the Chinese Indonesian Christian former governor of Jakarta that was the target of growing religious intolerance in Indonesia. In 2018, the GNI was able to reduce potential communal conflict in Surabaya by creating various dialogues and activities among the Christians, Muslims, and Buddhists to recover trust after the city's bombed attacks in May 2018.

Empowering women has also been one of the group's goals. The GNI has been involved in strengthening women's rights by gathering women activists from Islamic moderate groups in Indonesia and, together with other organizations working toward gender justice such as Fahmina Institute, Rahiman, and Alimat, initiating and establishing the *Jaringan kerja Ulama Perempuan Indonesia* (KUPI) or *Indonesian Women's Cleric Network* with thousands of moderate female clerics. This network has put effort in providing education and protection to women's groups and work in all sectors and in related policy advocacy on the national level to mainstream justice and equality of women in Indonesia.

“This year marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders,” TFD Chairman Su Jia-chyuan said at the announcement press conference today, adding that the mentality of discriminating against those who are different has long been the source of oppression and injustice in the human society. “[Discrimination] on the ground of religion, ethnic group, gender, or social class has been the

fetters and walls that we have been trying to break for years, and as the Taiwanese society has gradually become more diverse, open, and tolerant, we hope this award could encourage other countries and societies to achieve true equality and harmony,” he said.

Chairman Su praised the GNI’s work, which he said serves as an example for Taiwan and other countries. “As mainstream groups, the governments around the world should quicken the pace to recognize and correct the injustice that the vulnerable groups are now subjected to, and build a diverse society that respects human rights, peace, and tolerance,” he stressed.

He called on everyone not to look away “when injustice and persecution happens around us in our lives, for a room can be lightened up by candlelight; everyone of us should take making the human society more equal, fair and just our own responsibility.”

Article 2 of the TFD’s “Guidelines of the Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award” states that “[supporting] democratic development and promote human rights in the Asia region” is the foundational mission for establishing the Award.

A reviewer this year, Dimitris Christopoulos, President of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), is impressed by the GNI’s inter-faith dialogue endeavor, saying it is a valuable asset “coming from moderate Islamic activists in a world where Islamophobia penetrates mainstream political agendas.”

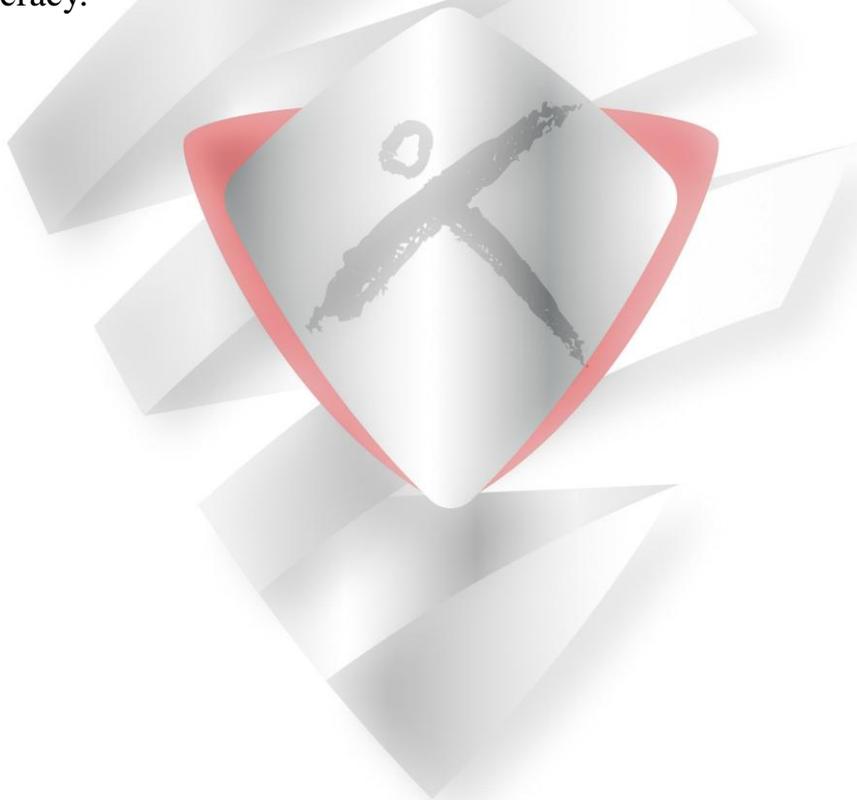
Dr. Shin Hae Bong, President of Japan’s Human Rights Now, also a final review panelist for this year’s Award, added that the GNI “contributed to creating a safe space of dialogue for people with diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds, which is especially important in multi-ethnic societies, playing thus a catalyst role in promoting interfaith dialogue, democracy and human rights in Indonesia and beyond.”

Gusdurian Network Indonesia was named the Award winner by a two-stage reviewing process (See Annex I). The TFD convened a preliminary review panel meeting facilitated by TFD President Ford Fu-Te Liao to discuss and shortlist the finalists. The three finalists’ names and credentials were then sent to the final review panel for a final



decision. This year's nominees included individuals and organizations from India, Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia and Sri Lanka that make respective contributions in the fields pertaining to religious plurality and freedom, political participation of the disadvantaged, environmental rights, transitional justice, anti-corruption, and government transparency.

The Taiwan Foundation for Democracy will host its 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award on December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018, the International Human Rights Day at Taipei Guest House. The GNI delegation, led by its National Coordinator Alissa Wahid, will come to Taipei to receive the award. The Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award includes an award trophy and a grant of US\$100,000 to support the organization's continuous efforts and contribution to the consolidation of democracy.



Media Contact:

Alison Hsiao

Tel: +886-2-2708-0100 #606

Email: [alison@tfd.org.tw](mailto:alison@tfd.org.tw)

Olivia Yang

Tel: +886-2-2708-0100 #607

Email: [olivia@tfd.org.tw](mailto:olivia@tfd.org.tw)

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## Annex I

### Preliminary Review Panel

1. Mr. Yu-Jen Kao, Chairman of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Foundation
2. Dr. Wei Chien-Feng, Supervisory Board Member, Taiwan Foundation for Democracy
3. Dr. Michael Hsin-Huang Hsiao, Distinguished Research Fellow of Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica
4. Ms. Lianron Lin, Chairperson, Coordination Council for North American Affairs
5. Ms. Hui-jung Chi, Chief Executive, Garden of Hope Foundation
6. Ms. Rebecca Wang, Director-General, Taiwan Aid
7. Dr. Ford Fu-Te Liao, President, Taiwan Foundation for Democracy

### Final Review Panel

1. Dr. Sima Samar, Dr. Sima Samar, Chairperson, Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission / Laureate, 2008 Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award
2. Mr. Derek Mitchell, President, National Democratic Institute
3. Mr. Arch Puddington, Distinguished Fellow for Democracy Studies, Freedom House
4. Mr. Dimitris Christopoulos, President, International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
5. Dr. Shin Hae Bong, President, Human Rights Now
6. Hon. Su Jia-chyuan, Chairman, Taiwan Foundation for Democracy
7. Dr. Ford Fu-Te Liao, President, Taiwan Foundation for Democracy

