

Concept Note

Southeast Asia Colloquium for Academic Freedom

Reclaiming Academic Freedom: Challenges, Prospects and Lesson Learned from Indonesia and The Philippines

14-15 August 2025

Surabaya, Indonesia

Co-Organizers

Indonesian Caucus for Academic Freedom (KIKA)

The Southeast Asia Coalition for Academic Freedom (SEACAF)

in collaboration with SEJAGAD UGM (Gadjah Mada Workers Union), University of the Philippines Academic Employees Union, Campus Workers Union (SPK), Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies (Mahidol University), and Universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya.

Background and Rationale

Academic freedom is a cornerstone of democratic society, allowing scholars and students to pursue truth, engage in critical inquiry, and contribute to public discourse without fear of censorship or retaliation. Academic freedom in Southeast Asia, however, is increasingly under threat, particularly in contexts marked by democratic backsliding. Commercialization and corporatization of universities are also limiting the space to nurture the production of critical knowledge. Academic pursuits are subjected to state surveillance, administrative sanctions, criminalization of dissent, and informal constraints on what can be taught, researched, or published.

Amidst the increasing pressure, academics, students and university personnels in many countries are at the forefront to defend academic freedom, freedom of expression and right to associations. Indonesia is one of the countries where there are strong initiatives to protect and promote those rights. In 2017, a group of academics drafted the Surabaya Principles on Academic Freedom to affirm academic freedom principles and how it should be implemented. A national coalition called the Indonesian Caucus for Academic Freedom (KIKA) was also formed as the key driver to protect academic freedom in the country. They are also joined by the Campus Workers Union (SPK) in these efforts.

The colloquium on Reclaiming Academic Freedom in Indonesia will provide a platform where the state of academic freedom in Indonesia and relevant experiences are discussed among the stakeholders to identify the necessary interventions. The colloquium will also be the opportunity to review and expand the Surabaya Principles on Academic Freedom in response to the changing context. Participants will develop specific policy recommendations to support academic freedom in Indonesia.

Objectives

1. To foster exchange among scholars, activists, and students about the state of academic freedom and shared struggles;
 2. To revisit the Surabaya Principles on Academic Freedom and expand the Principles to be culturally and politically grounded in the Southeast Asian context;
 3. To build networks of solidarity and support for academic freedom across institutions
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Target Audiences

- Indonesian academics and students
 - University administrators and education policymakers
 - Southeast Asian scholars and civil society actors
 - Journalists (including student press journalists)
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Tentative Agenda

Thursday 14 August 2025

9.00-9.20	Opening and Welcome Remarks	
	Radius Setiawan	Vice Rector in Partnership, Research, and Digitalization, UM Surabaya
	Bencharat Sae Chua	SEACAF Director
9.30-11.00	Panel Discussion: The State of Academic Freedom in Indonesia and The Philippines	
	<u>Panelists</u>	
	Satria Unggul Wicaksana	Dean, Faculty of Law, UM Surabaya Chair of KIKA
	Carl Marc Ramota	University of the Philippines-Manila
	ACT Philippines	
	<u>Discussant</u>	
	Riwanto Tirtosudarmo*	Independent Social Researcher

KIKA's Board

- 11.00-12.30 **Rethinking Surabaya Principles on Academic Freedom: Legal Framework and Its Challenges**
Herlambang P. Wiratraman LSJ Universitas Gadjah Mada Law School, KIKA's Board
Bencharat Sae Chua SEACAF; Mahidol University
Anis Hidayah Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission of Indonesia (Komnas HAM)
- Discussant
Sriprapha Petcharamesree Chulalongkorn University
- 12.30-14.00 Lunch and Prayer Time
- 14.00-16.00 **Panel Discussion: Strategizing the Defense of Academic Freedom and University Workers Union**
Rommel Rodriguez All University of the Philippines (UP) Academic Employees Union, University of the Philippines Diliman
I Gusti Agung Made Wardana* SEJAGAD / Gadjah Mada University's Workers Union
Dhia Al Uyyun Chair of SPK (The Indonesian Campus Workers' Union)
- Discussant:
Fuadi Pitsuwan Thammasat University
- 16.00-16.15 Wrap Up of the Day
Facilitated by Masayu* KIKA
- 16.15-16.45 Break
- 16.45-19.00 **Dinner Conversation**
Academic Freedom and Indonesia's Militarised Governance
M Isnur* Chair of YLBHI, KIKA's Board

Friday 15 August 2025

- 9.00-10.30 **Workshop on Academic Freedom Principles: Framework and Its Innovating Strategies**
Facilitated by Robertus Robet* KIKA's Board, Universitas Negeri Jakarta

10.30-11.30 **Closing Reflections: Toward a Regional Platform for Academic Freedom**

11.30-12.30 **Annual Meeting of Indonesian Academic Freedom**

Facilitator: Herdiansyah Hamzah KIKA' Member, Universitas Mulawarman