

The 3rd Niwano Peace Prize Visionary Award

Muslim Attorney Center (MAC)

Nationality: Thailand

Established: 2004

Organization by lawyers for protect human rights

Religion: Muslim



Reason

Muslim Attorney Center (MAC) was established by a group of Muslim lawyers who wanted to provide legal support to those who were being unjustly treated by the state and facing other security challenges, especially in Deep South Thailand, and engage to protect human rights.

Though their work is not restricted only to the Muslims or any specific part of Thailand, their main focus has been the three Southern-most provinces: Yala, Narathiwat, and Patani.

Muslims constitute about 5% of the total population in Thailand. In the southern-most three provinces, however, Muslims are the majority. Most of the Muslims in those three provinces are ethnic Malay, and many of them speak Malay language or its dialect at home. They are not only religiously but also ethnically different from Thai-speaking Buddhists. Since the 1950s, the Thai government has been implementing oppressive assimilation policies in these provinces, which caused resentment among Malay-Muslim residents, and tightened the ethnic tension in the region.

MAC has advocating non-violence, promoting inter-religious dialogues, and supporting other civic organizations in the region to strengthen religious tolerance and enhance religious and cultural self-esteem of the local residents.

Tirelessly working for human rights protection for two decades, MAC is now widely known in Thailand and playing an increasingly active role as a member of international networks for the protection of human rights of ethnic and religious minorities. As the secretariat of the Civil Society Assembly for Peace (CAP), a group of 27 civil society organizations in Thailand, MAC has also been continuously training the youth and women on non-violent means to create change and solve problems in Thailand's deep south.

MAC's tireless work for peace, with its dedication and courage in supporting those most in need of help despite the many hardships, especially under the military regime during 2014 to 2019, is highly respectable and truly worthy of prize, thus they were selected to receive the 3rd Niwano Peace Prize Visionary Award.