



ASIA-EUROPE LECTURE TOUR

"STORIES FROM BORDERS AND STORIES OF BORDERS"

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Abstract

By sharing true life stories from different countries both in Asia and Europe, the speaker attempts to critically reflect on the concepts of borders and frontiers both from legal and political perspectives.

The presentation shall begin with short stories (and pictures) of people that the speaker encountered both in Asia and in Europe. They are nationals of a given country, stateless, nationalityless persons and migrant workers/refugees. Though different in legal and social status, most, if not all of them have been facing the same problem, discrimination and other forms of human rights violations. The stories to be told are all real and all actors exist somewhere in our societies.

The presentation will later focus on conceptual analysis. "Borders define geographical boundaries of political entities or legal jurisdictions, such as governments, states or sub-national administrative divisions". A nation-state, therefore, "defines its geographical limits by territory and its demographic limits by nationality". A national of a given state is considered as member of that particular political community. Those who are not nationals are "aliens" or "foreigners" who are not usually entitled to the same membership goods or the same treatment. Division between nationals and non-nationals is, often times, so clear that it creates the sense of "us" and "others" and it perpetuates the sense of "exclusive state" through which borders no one can pass without control and restrictions.

From a human rights perspective, political (and economic) borders are arbitrary. Moreover, borders need not be seen only in their geographical and physical demarcation. Borders can easily be created from within oneself and one's own society. The discrimination against women, ethnic minorities, sexual minorities, etc, has nothing to do with nationality or being foreigners. But only they are considered as "different from us". Both Asian and European states have been increasingly facing a "diversity dilemmas" as they are becoming more and more exclusive. Thus, talking about a "sharing and caring community" is only a rhetorical discourse if diversity dilemmas and the issues of borders are not addressed.

The speaker will encourage participation of the audience to discuss similarities and differences when it comes to approaches and perspectives on the topic borders and frontiers between the two regions.

Profile of Speaker



Having her first degree in political science from Thammasat University, she furthered her studies in the same discipline and received her D.E.A. and then Ph.D. (Doctorate) in international politics from the University of Paris-X Nanterre, France. Her first formal contact with human rights works started when she served as a social worker at the UNICEF's Emergency Operations for Cambodian Refugees. In 1982 she joined the Department of Technical and Economic Cooperation until 1996 when she accepted an offer from Mahidol University. Until June 2007, she chaired the first International Master Program in Human Rights ever established in Thailand and in Asia. Under her directorship, two more human rights study programs have been established namely, Ph.D in Human Rights and Peace Studies, and MA. Program in Human Rights and

Development.

Active in human rights field both among academic community and human rights activists both at national and regional levels, she works closely with NGOs, grassroots people and some marginalized groups, ethnic minorities, migrant workers, asylum seekers, etc. Her recent works focus mainly on issue of citizenship, economic, social and cultural rights, rights to development, human rights-based to poverty eradication, community rights, and human rights education both within and outside educational system. She has recently completed a research project on "Towards and ASEAN Commission for the protection and promotion of rights of women and children" and preparing a book dealing with the issues of citizenship, statelessness, border and discrimination".

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