

Dhaka Declaration

The Dhaka declaration on June 2, 2001 at the concluding session of the South Asian conference on fundamentalism and communalism and role of civil society:

We members of the civil society of India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh having participated in the two day South Asian Conference on Fundamentalism and Communalism held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on June 1-2-2001;

1. Recognizing that fundamentalism and communalism are undermining the vitals of our society, eroding democratic values, norms and institutions and the perpetuation of continued acts of violence and terrorism;
2. Recognizing that women, children and people belonging to ethnic and religious minority groups are particularly being victimized by fundamentalist and communalist forces;
3. Recognizing that these forces are geared to gain political control by various means whatsoever;
4. Recognizing that there is a great urgency in checking and rendering these forces ineffective without further delay; further recognizing that unless concerted efforts are made to achieve these objectives, the entire South Asian region will be engulfed in medieval darkness;
5. Recognizing that countries in South Asia are endangered by identical problems we should move unitedly and resolutely to deal with the problems;
6. Recognizing that some political parties and social groups are using fundamentalist and communal ideologies as well as these forces in furthering their ends; affirming the need to urge upon political parties and social groups in South Asian countries to desist immediately from utilizing these forces for political benefit;
7. Affirming the need of de-communalization and secularization implying an active reconstruction of ethnic and religious identities in a spirit of equality, interdependence and mutual respect, we call upon states, governments political parties and civil society organizations to uphold inter-ethnic, inter-religious and inter-faith equality as inalienable democratic principles;
8. Recognizing that sections of a media are increasingly becoming the means to propagate fundamentalist, communalist and extremist ideology and sentiments, we call upon media institutions and personnel to uphold principles and ideals of democracy, pluralism and secularism in order to promote values of diversity and tolerance;
9. Recognizing that the process of secular democratization of South Asian societies could effectively challenge patriarchy and gender subordination, reinforced and sustained by

reactionary forces, we call upon states, political parties and civil society organization to uphold these fundamental principles;

10. We members of South Asian civil society;

- a) Recognizing that the present conference held in Dhaka on 1-2, June 2001 has been a milestone in bringing together members of the civil societies of South Asia and paving a path to fight the communal and fundamentalist force unitedly by upholding democratic, human and secular values; and pledge
- b) To harness our energies for promoting social justice, peace, gender equality, and secular democratic values,
- c) To work towards bringing all perpetrators of crimes against humanity and war criminals to justice.

Hence, we propose to establish a South Asian platform “**South Asian People’s Union against Fundamentalism and Communalism**” to join hands in resisting all forms of fundamentalism and communalism in the region.