

**LAWASIA**

THE LAW ASSOCIATION FOR  
ASIA AND THE PACIFIC  
FOUNDED IN 1966

21 March 2026

## **60<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION**

### **Mobilising Political Will: 60 Years of Commemoration**

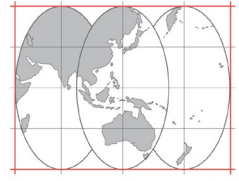
LAWASIA — the Law Association for Asia and the Pacific — marks the 60th International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination with resolve and a renewed sense of urgency. The United Nations theme for 2026, Mobilising Political Will: 60 Years of Commemorating the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, is not merely an occasion for reflection — it is a call to action directed at every institution, every profession and every individual with the capacity to effect change. The legal profession is foremost among them.

On 21 March 1960, sixty-nine people were killed by police during a peaceful demonstration in Sharpeville, South Africa, against the apartheid pass laws. That act of state violence galvanised the international community. In 1965, the United Nations adopted the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), and in 1966, it proclaimed March 21 as an annual day of recognition. Sixty years on, the promise embedded in that convention — that every person, regardless of race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin, is entitled to equal dignity and equal protection of the law — remains incompletely fulfilled.

For sixty years, LAWASIA has operated as a platform to promote the cross-jurisdictional exchange of legal knowledge, as a voice of the legal profession, and as a conduit for encouraging adherence to the mutually held principles of the rule of law, professional integrity, and the protection of human rights. Racial discrimination is an affront to each of those principles. It corrodes the administration of justice, undermines the independence of legal institutions, and denies individuals equal access to justice, which lies at the heart of the rule of law.

Across the Asia Pacific region, racial and ethnic discrimination continues to manifest in access to justice, in the composition of judiciaries and legal professions, in the treatment of migrant workers and stateless persons, in the marginalisation of Indigenous communities and peoples, and in the application of criminal laws that fall disproportionately on marginalised groups, including indigenous peoples across the region. These are not abstract concerns. They are documented realities in jurisdictions across our membership — realities that the legal profession has both the tools and the responsibility to confront.

LAWASIA calls on its member organisations, committees and individual members across the region to translate this anniversary into tangible commitment.



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The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination was adopted sixty years ago with the aspiration that racial discrimination would be consigned to history. That aspiration has not yet been realised. LAWASIA reaffirms its commitment to the rule of law, the protection of human rights and the equal administration of justice for all people, regardless of race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin. Sixty years of commemoration must be met with sixty renewed commitments to act.

**TL Yap**

President

LAWASIA, The Law Association for Asia and The Pacific