

**RESPONSE OF ASEAN TO HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS  
IN SOUTHEAST ASIA:  
CASE STUDIES OF CAMBODIA AND EAST TIMOR**

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M.A. (HUMAN RIGHTS)

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this research was to examine whether ASEAN collectively responds to human rights violations within the region, and why. Analysis was made focusing on two case studies – the 1997 July coup in Cambodia which was a result of the political conflict between co-prime ministers Prince Ranariddh and Hun Sen; and the 1999 East Timor crisis which was perpetrated by Indonesia, a founding member of ASEAN.

The research found that both cases which drew international attention were recognized as ‘serious violations of human rights’ by the United Nations. Particularly, the violations in East Timor were held to constitute crimes against humanity. ASEAN displayed double standards in its selective response to the two situations. It took collective action in Cambodia but responded only individually in the case of East Timor, without any consideration to the gravity of the human rights violations. The pressure from the international community, particularly donor countries which threatened to suspend military or financial aid, and contribute troops to UN peacekeeping forces, became a determinant factor influencing ASEAN’s response to these situations.

The research concluded that ASEAN has been reluctant to respond collectively to human rights violations within the region, because of the principle of non interference and respect for state sovereignty. In this way, in ASEAN functioning, respect for human rights are considered to be a by-product of political and economic stability and national interest rather than one of the fundamental principles of co-operation. Thus ASEAN’s approach to human rights has not been effective and adequate, and reflects the necessity to create common norms, standards and human rights mechanisms to deal with human rights concerns in the region.

**KEY WORDS: ASEAN/ COLLECTIVE RESPONSE/ HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS/ CAMBODIA/ EAST TIMOR**

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