

The Regionalism Paradox in the Fight against Human Trafficking: Indonesia and the Limits of Regional Cooperation in ASEAN

Authors : Nur Iman Subono, Meidi Kosandi

Abstract : This paper examines the role of regional cooperation in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in the fight against human trafficking for Indonesia. Many among scholars suggest that regional cooperation is necessary for combating human trafficking for its transnational and organized character as a crime against humanity. ASEAN members have been collectively active in responding transnational security issues with series of talks and collaboration agreement since early 2000s. Lately in 2015, ASEAN agreed on ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons, particularly Women and Children (ACTIP) that requires each member to collaborate in information sharing and providing effective safeguard and protection of victims. Yet, the frequency of human trafficking crime occurrence remains high and tend to increase in Indonesian in 2017-2018. The objective of this paper is to examine the effectiveness and success of ACTIP implementation in the fight against human trafficking in Indonesia. Based on two years of research (2017-2018) in three provinces with the largest number of victims in Indonesia, this paper shows the tendency of persisting crime despite the implementation of regional and national anti-trafficking policies. The research was conducted by archive study, literature study, discourse analysis, and depth interviews with local government officials, police, prosecutors, victims, and traffickers. This paper argues that the relative success of ASEAN in establishing convention at the high-level meetings has not been followed with the success in its implementation in the society. Three main factors have contributed to the ineffectiveness of the agreements, i.e. (1) ASEAN institutional arrangement as a collection of sovereign states instead of supranational organization with binding authority; (2) the lack of commitment of ASEAN sovereign member-states to the agreements; and (3) the complexity and variety of the nature of the crime in each member-state. In effect, these factors have contributed to generating the regionalism paradox in ASEAN where states tend to revert to national policies instead of seeking regional collective solution.

Keywords : human trafficking, transnational security, regionalism, anti trafficking policy

Conference Title : ICHTM 2019 : International Conference on Human Trafficking and Migration

Conference Location : Buenos Aires, Argentina

Conference Dates : February 27-28, 2019