

The Global Regulatory Challenge to Foreign Funding of NGOs: Asphyxia or Opportunity?

Professor Edwin Rekosh

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Founder, PILnet: The Global Network for Public Interest Law

FRIDAY 26TH FEBRUARY 2016, 13:00 – 14:00

ACADEMIC CONFERENCE ROOM, 11/F

CHENG YU TUNG TOWER, CENTENNIAL CAMPUS

THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG



Prof. Rekosh will outline the growing trend for governments to use their regulatory powers to restrict foreign donor support to local NGOs, arguably cutting off the oxygen supply for civil society in many countries. Although seemingly a step back from “inclusive governance,” the quickly spreading attack on foreign charitable funding may create opportunities to rethink civil society in more adaptable and sustainable forms than what has been the dominant model for the last quarter century.

Professor Edwin Rekosh teaches human rights, law and development at Columbia Law School. He is the founder of PILnet and was its president and CEO until 2015. He continues to serve the organization as an advisor as he works on developing new solutions to address the closing space for civil society around the world.

The original inspiration for PILnet, which Rekosh established as a program of Columbia Law School in 1997, came from his work assisting the development of human rights groups in Romania and then elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe during the early 1990s as they sought to engage with their countries' newly emerging constitutional orders. Rekosh lived for a cumulative total of 10 years in Romania and Hungary and has assisted civil society organizations and law schools to develop public interest legal programs in China and over 30 other countries around the world. In addition, he has been a leader in global efforts over the past decade to develop pro bono practice by law firms and corporations.

Rekosh also taught as a visiting professor at Central European University for four years. Prior to founding PILnet, he consulted for the Ford Foundation, worked for Global Rights in Washington, DC and Bucharest, practiced law at Coudert Brothers and co-founded the Human Rights Watch Film Festival.

Rekosh has written and spoken extensively about human rights, civil society, pro bono and the rule of law, and he received the American Bar Association's International Human Rights Award in 2009. He is a graduate of Cornell University and Columbia Law School.

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