

SENATE
P. S. R. No. 1315

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Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE PROPER SENATE COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE ALLEGED MURDER OF A PHILIPPINE ATTACHE BY A HUMAN TRAFFICKING SYNDICATE

WHEREAS, the Constitution, Article 2, Section 5 provides: "The maintenance of peace and order, the protection of life, liberty, and property, and promotion of the general welfare are essential for the enjoyment by all the people of the blessings of democracy";

WHEREAS, *ABS-CBN News*, in an article dated 18 August 2009, posited that it was possible that social work attaché Finardo Cabilao was murdered by human trafficking syndicates preying on Filipino women in Malaysia;

WHEREAS, the report claimed that groups involved in the fight against the trafficking menace supported this theory; however, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) cautioned the public against prematurely jumping into such conclusions;

WHEREAS, Philippine ambassador to Malaysia Victoriano Lecaros reportedly said that although people should not jump to conclusions, if the Cabilao was indeed killed by human trafficking syndicates then all of those against these human traffickers are in danger, too; "

WHEREAS, Cabilao, a staunch defender of human trafficking victims, was reportedly found dead in his Kuala Lumpur apartment at the Taman Maluri district two weeks ago because of trauma resulting from head injuries;

WHEREAS, Cabilao's fellow social workers claimed that he received work-related death threats and that he was writing a book on the business and victims of human trafficking for prostitution in Malaysia;

WHEREAS, non-government organizations involved in the fight against trafficking in persons described Cabilao as "a tireless champion for trafficked victims" and credited him for helping find and repatriate back to the Philippines numerous women who were trafficked into prostitution in various Malaysian provinces;

WHEREAS, among the organizations that have worked closely with Cabilao in relation to various human trafficking cases were the Kanlungan Foundation, the Visayan Forum Foundation, and the Blas Ople Foundation;

WHEREAS, Nina Belmonte, a Kanlungan case manager, claimed that Cabilao helped them repatriate 15 trafficking victims and that the last time he emailed her, Cabilao was reportedly handling 177 cases of human trafficking in his International Social Welfare Service Concept Paper for June 2009;

WHEREAS, Lecaros reportedly said that unlike other social welfare attachés, Cabilao did not have an assistant; Cabilao was also described as a “lone operator” except when he had to collaborate with other embassy staff;

WHEREAS, it was reported that Cabilao’s face was disfigured and he was bruised all over, with a black eye, wounds in the lips and right cheek and a sunken nose;

WHEREAS, Lecaros claimed that the Royal Malaysian Police are treating the case very seriously, particularly since it involves a member of the diplomatic community;

WHEREAS, local dailies in Kuala Lumpur reported earlier that Malaysian police have ruled out robbery as motive since Cabilao’s cash and valuables, such as his camera, laptop, watch, and other belongings were left intact;

WHEREAS, it was learned that fellow social workers said Cabilao received death threats for helping solve cases of human trafficking;

WHEREAS, Lecaros reportedly said that he has decided to move out all Philippine embassy staff living in the complex where Cabilao used to live because, the guard at the complex did not even ask for identification and simply allowed visitors to enter the complex;

WHEREAS, Department of Social Welfare and Development Secretary Esperanza Cabral reportedly said she will immediately replace Cabilao to help overseas Filipinos in distress;

WHEREAS, Evelyn Serrano of the International Federation of Social Workers together with other organizations of social workers have expressed concern over the security of the social worker who will replace Cabilao;

WHEREAS, aside from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, other Philippine embassies that have social welfare attaches are Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Kuwait, Jeddah, Riyadh, Korea and Jordan;

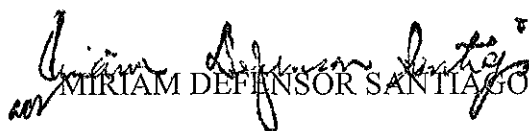
WHEREAS, the senseless death of social worker Finardo Cabilao, whose mission is to help trafficked Filipino workers, is a tragic loss not only to his family and the Philippine diplomatic community but also to all peace-loving Filipinos;

WHEREAS, Cabilao’s choice to forego his diplomatic immunity in order to testify against human traffickers is a heroic act that should be commended;

WHEREAS, legislature should increase penalties against human traffickers and strengthen its coordination with non-government organization in the fight against human traffickers;

WHEREFORE, be it hereby resolved by the Philippine Senate, to investigate, in aid of legislation, on the alleged murder of a Philippine attaché by a human trafficking syndicate.

Adopted,


MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO

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