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SENATE

P.S. Res. No. 105

RECEIVED BY: 

INTRODUCED BY HON. MANUEL B. VILLAR, JR.

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON FOREIGN RELATIONS AND LABOR, EMPLOYMENT AND HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, INTO THE ALARMING REPORTS OF DEATHS AMONG OFWS, WITH THE END VIEW OF ASCERTAINING GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND PERSONNEL' GROSS NEGLIGENCE IN LOOKING OUT FOR THE WELFARE OF OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS (OFWs) AND RECOMMENDING POLICY MEASURES TO AVERT FURTHER UNNECESSARY DEATHS

WHEREAS, on August 24, 2004, Hera Olandres, a Filipina maid in Lebanon committed suicide after her employer allegedly raped and sodomized her;

WHEREAS, Olandres is a victim of illegal recruitment and is the 4th Filipina maid to die in Lebanon. Louella Montenegro, 46, from Bukidnon died last February 24, 2004, Catherine Bautista, 22, from Binmaley town in Pangasinan died last May 4, 2004, and Luz Paras Pacu-an, 22, of Reparo St., Caloocan City died last May 16, 2004. All three maids allegedly also committed suicide;

WHEREAS, another Filipina maid named Leonora Aquino working in Singapore, died last September 2, 2004 after falling from a high rise building in the said country;

WHEREAS, the OFWs mysterious deaths, particularly that of our domestic helpers, are alarming. Worse, these cases remain unresolved;

WHEREAS, families of these OFWs have expressed disgust over the Philippine embassy, labor, and welfare officials' inaction, indifference, and gross negligence on OFWs pleas for repatriation and rescue from the hands of very abusive employers;

WHEREAS, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), in its June 2003 semi-annual report to Congress, estimated the number of OFWs in the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, and the Middle East and Africa to 5,322,543;

WHEREAS, the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration's latest records showed that the total number of Filipino workers abroad grew by 9.2% posting a deployment of 501,713 in the first semester of 2004;

WHEREAS, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) reported that remittances from OFWs, which now represent 25% of the country's total labor force, reached \$4 billion during the first six months of 2004, up by 2.6% from \$3.8 billion in the same period in 2003. BSP data also showed that OFW remittances improved to \$706 million in June, up by 19.41% from \$591 million in the same month last year;

WHEREAS, despite bringing in dollars in the country, where OFWs' remittances make up roughly 1/12th of the Gross National Product and has kept our economy afloat, OFWs are still considered as among the marginalized sectors in the Philippine society;

WHEREAS, although some OFWs were able to find jobs abroad to support their families in the Philippines, a number became victims of maltreatment, non-payment of salaries, contract violation, poor working conditions, health problems, sexual harassment, rape, imprisonment, and even end up dead;

WHEREAS, RA 8042 otherwise known as "Migrant Workers And Overseas Filipinos Act Of 1995" was enacted last June 7, 1995, to establish a higher standard of protection and promotion of the welfare of migrant workers, their families and overseas *Filipinos in distress, and for other purposes*;

WHEREAS, under the said law, the DFA, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) are mandated to promote the welfare and protect the rights of migrant workers and, as far as applicable, all overseas Filipinos;

WHEREAS, despite the presence of these government agencies, there has been lack of sufficient assistance extended to distressed or beleaguered OFWs and their respective families;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, as it is hereby resolved, to direct the Senate Committees on Foreign Relations and Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, into the alarming reports of deaths among OFWs, with the end view of ascertaining government agencies and personnel' gross negligence in looking out for the welfare of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) and recommending policy measures to avert further unnecessary deaths.

Adopted,


MANUEL B. VILLAR, JR.
Senator