

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Second Regular Session)



Senate
Office of the Secretary

20 JUL 20 P3:31

SENATE

P. S. RES. NO. 468

RECEIVED BY

Introduced by SENATOR VICENTE C. SOTTO III

RESOLUTION

**DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE,
IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE DEATH OF PERSONS
DEPRIVED OF LIBERTY (PDLs) IN THE NATIONAL BILIBID
PRISON AND SUCH OTHER PENAL FACILITIES UNDER THE
BUREAU OF CORRECTIONS ALLEGEDLY DUE TO COVID-19
DISEASE**

WHEREAS, the coronavirus disease, also known as COVID-19, has been declared by the World Health Organization as Public Health Emergency of International Concern as it continuously hit almost all countries and territories around the world, inflicting millions; thus, creating a global health crisis;

WHEREAS, COVID-19 likewise affects all segments of population - rich and poor, young and old, male and female, and living in urban and rural areas. Whether just staying at home, or locked up in a facility, someone is still at risk of contracting the subject disease;

WHEREAS, as of July 19, 2020, there are already 67,456 total confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the country - 43,160 of which are active cases and 1,831 of which already died;

WHEREAS, based on published reports, the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor), on 4 June 2020, has reported 222 cases and 10 deaths among its inmates due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)¹;

WHEREAS, just more than ten (10) days after the afore-stated report, the BuCor reported 301 confirmed cases and 16 have died due to COVID-19²;

WHEREAS, an alarming news have been going around that, at least, nine (9) high-profile inmates of the New Bilibid Prison (NBP)³, mostly convicted drug lords and detained in Building 14, a highly secured facility inside the Maximum Security Compound, died of COVID-19;

WHEREAS, while BuCor Chief Gerald Bantag has confirmed that there were persons deprived of liberty (PDLs) who died due to COVID-19, he did not disclose their identities as it is, according to him, is prohibited under the Data Privacy Act;

WHEREAS, in an interview with Chief Bantag on 20 July 2020⁴, when asked about the death of PDLs in NBP, he confirmed that there were Filipino and Chinese drug lords who died due to COVID-19 and, based on their records, 21 PDLs already died out of the 339 confirmed cases but the said number of deaths does not pertain only to drug lords;

WHEREAS, based on the log of the Panteon de Dasmariñas Public Cemetery in Dasmariñas, Cavite and according to its Officer-in-Charge Liezl Camaganacan, Jaybee Sebastian's body was cremated by them on 18 July 2020⁵. Some names including one Marcelo, Zhang and Hung were likewise among the 28 bodies that the crematorium had cremated since May 31⁶;

WHEREAS, according to Cavite Representative Elpidio Barzaga, no autopsies were conducted on the bodies cremated at the Panteon de Dasmariñas. Rep. Barzaga further stated that the BuCor paid Dasmariñas City P15,000 for each deceased prisoner "but our people [at the

¹ <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/metro/741219/bucor-reports-222-covid-19-cases-10-deaths-among-inmates/story/>

² <https://rappler.com/nation/supreme-court-defers-deciding-prisoner-release>

³ <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1309104/covid-19-kills-9-high-profile-inmates>

⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/CNNPhilippines/videos/704267960131004/?vh=e&extid=opOSq4V4WNBh0Vjl&d=n>

⁵ <https://www.manilatimes.net/2020/07/20/news/top-stories/nbp-inmate-jaybee-sebastian-dies-of-covid/743557/>

⁶ *Supra*

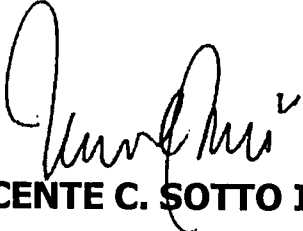
crematorium] were not to open the body bags anymore. So long as there were death certificates and the proper papers, the bodies were cremated straight away";⁷

WHEREAS, further to the aforesaid report, a ranking police official, who was aware of the supposed COVID-19 deaths, said that "They [BuCor] could have just replaced the body [with another inmate and declared the death of a high-profile inmate]. How would we know? There were no more fingerprints;"

WHEREAS, due to unclear, inaccurate, and unverified reports, speculations are now being made as to whether or not these NBP inmates actually died due to COVID-19 disease;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, as it hereby resolved by the Senate to direct the appropriate Senate committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the death of persons deprived of liberty (PDLs) in the National Bilibid Prison and such other penal facilities under the Bureau of Corrections allegedly due to COVID-19 disease.

Adopted,


VICENTE C. SOTTO III