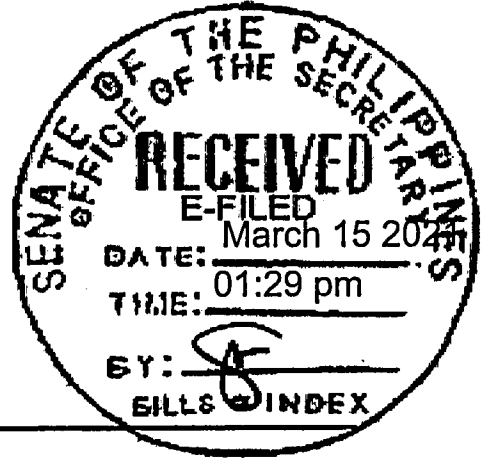


EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Second Regular Session)



SENATE

P.S. Res. No. 683

Introduced by SENATOR LEILA M. DE LIMA

RESOLUTION

CONDEMNING IN THE STRONGEST SENSE THE MURDER OF CALBAYOG CITY MAYOR RONALDO AQUINO, AND URGING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE CONTINUING ATTACKS AND KILLINGS OF LOCAL CHIEF EXECUTIVES ACROSS THE COUNTRY, WITH THE END VIEW OF IDENTIFYING THE GAPS IN LAW ENFORCEMENT, ATTAINING JUSTICE FOR ALL VICTIMS, AND BREAKING THE CULTURE OF IMPUNITY, ESPECIALLY AMONG LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

1 WHEREAS, Article II, Section 4 of the Constitution states in part that “[t]he
2 prime duty of the Government is to serve and protect the people”;

3 WHEREAS, Article II, Section 11 of the same declares that “[t]he State values
4 the dignity of every human person and guarantees full respect for human rights”;

5 WHEREAS, on 8 March 2021, Calbayog City Mayor Ronald Aquino and two of
6 his bodyguards were killed in a reported ambush while cruising through Laboyao
7 Bridge in the city’s Lonoy village heading north when fired at by gunmen riding in
8 two cars;¹

9 WHEREAS, according to the Philippine National Police (PNP), “[t]here was
10 an exchange of gunfire between the two groups that resulted to casualties on both
11 sides.” PNP Chief General Debold Sinas noted that the PNP suffered two casualties
12 and reclassified the incident as a “shootout” and not an ambush;²

¹ SunStar Cebu (8 March 2021) *Calbayog City mayor shot dead*
Retrieved last 11 March 2021 from: <https://www.sunstar.com.ph/article/1888192/Cebu/Local-News/Calbayog-City-mayor-shot-dead>

² Macasero, R. (9 March 2021) *PNP now says Calbayog mayor killed in ‘shootout’ not ‘ambush’*. Retrieved 11 March 2021 from: <https://www.rappler.com/nation/pnp-says-calbayog-mayor-killed-shootout-not-ambush>

1 WHEREAS, the PNP also claimed the that they were conducting a “Red
2 Teaming inspection” on the operational readiness of PNP units in the area – a police
3 term meaning they were role playing as the enemy in security drills, when one of the
4 escorts of the mayor fired at the police unit;³

5 WHEREAS, Samar 1st District Representatives Edgar Mary Sarmiento refuted
6 the PNP’s statement which claimed that the mayor’s escorts were the first to fire at
7 anti-narcotics officers that were tailing their vehicle. He revealed that the police were
8 already waiting for Aquino’s vehicle at Laboyao Bridge in Barangay Lonoy, Calbayog
9 City before the shooting incident at 5:30 p.m;⁴

10 WHEREAS, the lawmaker also disclosed that the anti-narcotics officers were
11 wearing balaclava masks and had M-203s in their vehicles⁵. The autopsy report also
12 revealed that Mayor Aquino suffered 21 gunshot wounds on half of his body⁶. He
13 questioned the claims of PNP that they were merely Red Teaming – for if the true
14 nature of their operations was only to inspect, why was there a need to bring high-
15 powered firearms?⁷ He pointed out that based on the initial evidence and facts on the
16 ground, the incident was an ambush by rogue elements of the police force.⁸
17 Witnesses claimed that the incident began with the assailants opening fire on Mayor
18 Aquino’s vehicle;⁹

19 WHEREAS, this bloody incident is not the first of its in kind. The killing of
20 Mayor Ronaldo Aquino is but the latest local official to fall victim to the spate of

³ Ibid

⁴ ABS-CBN News (10 March 2021) *'Binaril, binalikan': Calbayog mayor was killed by cops from outside city – lawmaker*. Retrieved 11 March 2021 from: <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/03/10/21/binaril-binalikan-calbayog-mayor-was-killed-by-cops-from-outside-city-lawmaker>

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Gonzales, C. (11 March 2021) *Calbayog City mayor suffered 21 gunshot wounds on half of his body, says son*. Retrieved 12 March 2021 from <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1405583/calbayog-city-mayor-suffered-21-gunshot-wounds-on-half-of-his-body-says-son>

⁷ Aspinwall, N. (12 March 2021) *Philippine Mayor Among 6 Killed in Police Shootout*. Retrieved 14 March 2021 from: <https://thediplomat.com/2021/03/philippine-mayor-among-6-killed-in-police-shootout/>

⁸ ABS-CBN News (11 March 2021) *Calbayog mayor 'murdered by rogue elements of PNP' – Sarmiento* retrieved 12 March 2021 from <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/03/11/21/calbayog-mayor-murdered-by-rogue-elements-of-pnp-sarmiento>

⁹ *Supra* Note 2.

1 killings committed against local chief executives across the country. His death has
2 brought to 25 the tally of mayors and vice mayors killed since 2016;¹⁰

3 WHEREAS, the series of extrajudicial killings waged against local chief
4 executives and the subsequent failure of the government to take meaningful action to
5 give justice to the victims are part of a pattern of and systematic violations of human
6 rights in the country, including by state agents;

7 WHEREAS, due to the alarming series of targeted killings to local chief
8 executives across the country, it is imperative for the Senate to conduct a thorough,
9 independent and impartial inquiry to determine, once and for all, the concrete efforts
10 the government has undertaken and is undertaking to stop the killings and seek
11 answers to the reported illegal activities of alleged rogue police personnel;

12 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE, to condemn in the
13 strongest sense the murder of Calbayog City Mayor Ronaldo Aquino and urge the
14 appropriate Senate Committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the
15 continuing attacks and killings of local chief executives across the country, with the
16 end view of identifying the gaps in law enforcement, attaining justice for all victims,
17 and breaking the culture of impunity, especially among law enforcement agencies.

Adopted,


HEILA M. DE LIMA

¹⁰ Roperto, G. (10 March 2021) *Mayors and Vice Mayors killed during Duterte administration*. Retrieved 12 March 2021 from: https://news.abs-cbn.com/focus/07/04/18/mayors-and-vice-mayors-killed-under-duterte-administration?fbclid=IwAR1gETJm78__fB1JtPQTZhOQU-y7YL9FmGgv0w9_rNIREK7BtkDOrED0