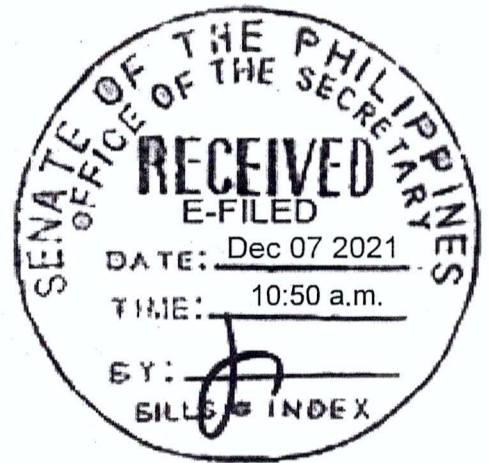


EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Third Regular Session)



SENATE

P.S. Res. No. 957

Introduced by **SENATOR LEILA M. DE LIMA**

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, INTO THE BUREAU OF CORRECTIONS' (BUCOR) BLOCKADE AND DESTRUCTION OF THE ROAD AT THE NATIONAL BILIBID PRISON (NBP) IN MUNTINLUPA CITY IN AN APPARENT DISREGARD OF LOCAL ORDINANCES AND THE RIGHTS OF RESIDENTS WHO HAVE BEEN EFFECTIVELY SHUT OFF FROM THE CITY, AND RENEGING ON PREVIOUS COMMITMENTS MADE WITH LOCAL OFFICIALS ON PRIOR NOTICE AND COMMUNICATION, WITH THE END IN VIEW OF DETERMINING ACCOUNTABILITY AND ADDRESSING GAPS IN THE EXISTING LAWS

1 WHEREAS, on 26 November 2021, the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) erected
2 a wall aimed at closing the Insular Prison Road in Muntinlupa City. The wall was made
3 of hollow blocks which cut access to Department of Justice's (DOJ) Housing Projects
4 Katarungan Villages 1 and 2 from the Muntinlupa City proper;¹

5 WHEREAS, the incident is the latest attempt of the BuCor to restrict access in
6 the New Bilibid Prison (NBP) reservation in Muntinlupa City. It can be recalled that
7 back in March 2021, BuCor received flak for building a brick wall to seal off a
8 community in the NBP reservation. A 18 March 2021 letter by BuCor Spokesman
9 Assistant Secretary Gabriel Chaclag, addressed to Barangay Poblacion Chairman Allan
10 Ampaya, stated that paths leading to NHA Southville 3 and the route in front of Tower
11 8 would "not be accessible temporarily" to pedestrians and motorists." Asec. Chaclag

¹ Cellona, J. (29 November 2021) *BuCor closes Insular Prison Road in Muntinlupa*. Retrieved 01 December 2021, from: <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/multimedia/photo/11/29/21/road-closure-in-katarungan-muntinlupa>

1 cited “security enhancements and health protocols” as well as “curfew hours” for
2 blocking the road but did not elaborate;²

3 WHEREAS, this new blockade again earned the ire of residents in the area
4 because it did not only catch them by surprise but the BuCor also violated certain
5 ordinances issued by the local government of Muntinlupa, as well as reneged on
6 previous commitments made after a similar incident in March of this year;

7 WHEREAS, angered residents then tore down the third wall that BuCor
8 erected. However, the BuCor did not stand down. In an apparent retaliation, it
9 escalated matters and decided to put a blockade by bulldozing the concrete bridge that
10 connects residents of Katarungan Village 1 and 2.³ The City Government of
11 Muntinlupa uploaded in its official Facebook page a video of a ruined road being dug
12 by a backhoe as people watched;⁴

13 WHEREAS, Muntinlupa Mayor Jaime Fresnedi slammed the BuCor for its
14 blatant contempt of the local government. He disclosed that the BuCor failed to secure
15 permits and to coordinate with both the City Hall and Barangay Poblacion. “They built
16 the wall like a thief in the night. What is the BuCor’s reason for clandestinely setting
17 up another blockade?”, he commented;⁵

18 WHEREAS, on 27 November 2021, DOJ Secretary Menardo Guevarra said that
19 he has already “strongly recommended” to BuCor Chief Director-General Gerald
20 Bantag to “stop any further action on the wall or bridge” until they have sat down to
21 discuss the matter. He added that the DOJ was not even advised of BuCor’s plans to
22 put up a wall. However, despite such recommendation, the BuCor, in a statement that
23 night, said that it would stand firm with its decision “out of ensuring the safety and
24 security of the prison facility.” BuCor argued that the residents affected had “more
25 than enough access points” anyway;

² Villanueva, R. (21 March 2021) *BuCor builds wall to block Bilibid road*. Retrieved 01 December 2021, from <https://www.philstar.com/nation/2021/03/21/2085834/bucor-builds-wall-block-bilibid-road>

³ Cabalza, D. (28 November 2021) *Muntinlupa gov’t, residents slam BuCor’s 3rd blockade*. Retrieved 02 December 2021, from <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1520722/muntinlupa-govt-residents-slam-bucors-3rd-blockade>

⁴ Talabong, R. (28 November 2021) *BuCor chief Gerald Bantag declared persona non grata in Muntinlupa*. Retrieved 02 December 2021, from <https://www.rappler.com/nation/bureau-of-corrections-chief-gerald-bantag-persona-non-grata-muntinlupa-city/>

⁵ *Supra* Note 3.

1 WHEREAS, the pronouncements made by the BuCor are, however, belied by
2 photographs of residents affected by the said construction which surfaced online
3 showing them being forced to find “more expensive ways to walk to their homes or
4 workplaces.” Reports also showed how teachers of the Muntinlupa National High
5 School Main Campus, which is close to the wall, expressed their concern over the effect
6 of the road closure to their students once face-to-face classes begin. Prior to the
7 closure, jeepneys were allowed to pass through the roads so that students, teachers
8 and other personnel may avail of their services. However, with the closure, their
9 options have been drastically reduced – with tricycle ride fair now costing PHP 35.00;⁶

10 WHEREAS, Muntinlupa Representative Ruffy Biazon expressed that they were
11 caught blindsided by the BuCor. “*Binigla kami lahat*”, he commented, adding that the
12 construction was done “*walang pasabi, walang konsultasyon*, nothing whatsoever
13 *kaya naman masyadong matindi ‘yung ginagawa’*”;⁷

14 WHEREAS, in an emergency session on 27 November 2021, the Muntinlupa
15 City Council passed six (6) resolutions which condemned the actions of the BuCor and
16 its officials for the sudden and illegal closures.⁸ One of the resolutions declared
17 Director-General Bantag *persona non grata*;⁹

18 WHEREAS, one of the resolutions passed by the City Council was an appeal to
19 the Senate to probe BuCor’s construction of road-blocking walls;

20 WHEREAS, on 02 December 2021, BuCor issued guidelines on persons allowed
21 inside the NBP Reservation in Poblacion, Muntinlupa. As a compromise, NBP
22 prisoners, supervised by BuCor personnel, cleared a portion of the road and installed
23 a gate beside the concrete wall. It then put up a sign which shows a list of prohibited
24 persons and acts inside the NBP Reservation starting 01 December 2021. Among these
25 is the ban on the entry of public tricycles – a mode of transportation for many of the
26 residents, teachers and students who do not have their own vehicles;

⁶ ABS-CBN News. (29 November 2021) ‘*Binigla kami*’: Opisyal ikinagulat ang pagapapatayo ng BuCor ng pader sa Muntinlupa. Retrieved 01 December 2021, from <https://news.abs-cbn.com/video/news/11/29/21/opisyal-nagulat-sa-pagapapatayo-ng-pader-sa-muntinlupa>

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Supra* Note 2.

⁹ *Supra* Note 4.

1 WHEREAS, BuCor and its officials apparently acted beyond the scope of their
2 authority when they pursued the construction of wall and eventual destruction of road
3 and bridge without prior notice to the City Government and Barangay having
4 jurisdiction over the disputed area;

5 WHEREAS, the Senate must look into whether existing laws have been violated
6 in the construction of the said wall which did not only disregard the local government
7 but as well as the rights of the residents who have been left traversing unsafe and
8 unlighted pathways, and have been reduced to avail of transportation services at a
9 hefty cost;

10 WHEREAS, the construction of the gate in lieu of the wall previously erected
11 does not erase the culpability of those involved in the construction of the said wall, as
12 well as the destruction of the road and bridge last 27 November 2021;

13 WHEREAS, it is imperative to determine whether the road closure order has
14 been made in excess of the jurisdiction and mandate of the BuCor, resulting in an
15 abuse of authority. In insisting that the closure is necessary for security and safety,
16 questions should be raised as to whether the BuCor is openly admitting that its
17 monitoring and control over the NBP is so insufficient that it has necessitated the
18 sealing off of residents within the villages concerned. The BuCor must likewise be able
19 to prove through empirical evidence that the closure of the roads guarantee that the
20 illegal activities inside the NBP will finally be eradicated;

21 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE, to direct the
22 appropriate Senate Committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, into the
23 Bureau of Corrections' (BuCor) blockade and destruction of the road at the National
24 Bilibid Prison (NBP) in Muntinlupa City in an apparent disregard of local ordinances
25 and the rights of residents who have been effectively shut off from the City, and
26 reneging on previous commitments made with local officials on prior notice and
27 communication, with the end in view of determining accountability and addressing
28 gaps in the existing laws.

Adopted,


LEILA M. DE LIMA