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REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES }
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SENATE
P. Senate Resolution No. 163

RECEIVED BY: 

Introduced by Senator M. A. Madrigal

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS TO INVESTIGATE, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, THE REPORTED COMPILATION OF A SECRET BLACKLIST OF PERSONS WHO ARE KNOWN TO BE HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATES AND CRITICAL OF THE MACAPAGAL-ARROYO ADMINISTRATION THAT ARE BANNED BY THE BUREAU OF IMMIGRATION FROM ENTERING THE COUNTRY

Whereas Human Rights Watch, an independent international non-governmental organization that conducts research and advocacy on human rights, in a statement on September 28, 2007, protested the issuance of a Philippine government "blacklist" banning 504 people from more than 50 countries for entering the country in July and August 2007;

Whereas the New York-based Human Rights Watch said it obtained a copy of the list from a lawyer who had petitioned the Bureau of Immigration to remove his client from it;

Whereas the 20-page document, posted in the website of Human Rights Watch, includes separate letters signed by Bureau of Immigration Commissioner Marcelino Libanan and Department of Justice Secretary Raul Gonzales referring to issuance of "order(s)" "to lift subjects' names from the Bureau's blacklist" as well as a list marked "Secret" containing the names of 504 persons by nationality said to have "Al-Qaeda/ Taliban links";

Whereas the blacklist includes members of prominent organizations such as the US-based Church World Service, the Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society, the National Lawyers Guild and the Center for Constitutional Rights, and expatriate Filipinos and other individuals working for the International Labor Solidarity Mission and civil society organizations;

Whereas many of those on the blacklist are, in fact, prominent human rights advocates that include former US attorney general Ramsey Clark, writer and academic Michael Chossudovsky of Canada, 2005 Right Livelihood (parallel Nobel prize) awardee Irene Fernandez of Malaysia, former Norwegian diplomat Oystein

Tveter, acclaimed novelist Ninotchka Rosca and Rev. Barry Naylor of the Anglican Church in the United Kingdom;

Whereas “the government’s blacklisting of its critics is shocking in a country that prides itself on being a democracy that values free speech,” said Human Rights Watch. “Many people on this blacklist have done little more than criticize the government or work to protect Filipinos from the country’s abusive security forces”;

Whereas the blacklist cited by Human Rights Watch came into effect on July 24, 2007 in connection with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) ministerial meeting held in the country from July 21 to August 2, and was apparently lifted on August 10;

Whereas also among those in the list is Dr. Annalisa Enrile, a U.S. citizen and assistant clinical professor at the University of Southern California’s School of Social Work as well as national chair of Gabriela Network (GABNet) USA, who was barred from boarding her return flight to Los Angeles on August 5 purportedly because her name was on the Bureau of Immigration’s “hold-departure order”;

Whereas Dr. Enrile attended the 10th bi-annual Women’s International Solidarity Affair in the Philippines (WISAP) held in Manila last July, which was sponsored by the militant women’s alliance Gabriela;

Whereas Dr. Enrile was not told the reason for her inclusion in the list and why Philippine authorities were preventing her from leaving. She was instead asked to secure clearance from the recently-created Anti-Terrorism Council that includes DOJ Secretary Raul Gonzalez, National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales, Cesar Garcia of the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency and AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr.;

Whereas Dr. Enrile, together with novelist Ninotchka Rosca and woman activist Judith Mirkinson, were eventually allowed to return to the U.S. after they brought their case to the public and sought action from the U.S. embassy. Hours before their flight was to leave last August 14, their names were ordered removed from the list by the Bureau of Immigration;

Whereas prior to these incidents, there were already several other cases whereby some of those in the “blacklist” who came to the Philippines were subjected to harassment at the immigration counters of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport;

Whereas the compilation of a secret watchlist or “blacklist,” exclusion order or hold order has been put into effect at a time when the Macapagal-Arroyo government has been under increasing domestic and international pressure over large numbers of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances of activists;

Whereas while the Philippine government has the right and duty to protect its citizens from genuine security threats, Human Rights Watch noted that “labeling

peaceful critics as Al-Qaeda or Taliban only serves to sap public confidence in counter-terror measures and exposes them as a cover for suppressing dissent”;

Whereas “while President Arroyo has made numerous public announcements welcoming international assistance in investigating unsolved killings in the Philippines, her government’s banning of peaceful critics makes a mockery of this,” said Sophie Richardson, Asia advocacy director at Human Rights Watch. “The government’s blacklist and its failure to prosecute members of the security forces for human rights abuses make it seem more interested in silencing its critics than in ensuring justice.”;

Whereas since the government did not publicly announce the blacklist, it is not clear whether this or any other blacklist is still in effect at present to stop critics of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration from entering the country;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, to direct the Committee on Justice and Human Rights to investigate, in aid of legislation, the reported compilation of a secret blacklist of persons who are known to be human rights advocates and critical of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration that are banned by the Bureau of Immigration from entering the country.

Adopted,


M. A. MADRIGAL