

FIFTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC)
OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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SENATE
S. No. 1670

RECEIVED BY

Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Human Rights Day is celebrated annually across the world on 10 December. The date was chosen to honor the United Nations General Assembly's adoption and proclamation, on 10 December 1948, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the first global enunciation of human rights.

The essence of the concept of human rights is that every individual has certain inalienable and legally enforceable rights protecting him or her against state interference and the abuse of power of governments.¹ They specify the minimum conditions for human dignity and a tolerable life. Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings. We are all equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination.²

Universal human rights are often expressed and guaranteed by law, in the forms of treaties, customary international law, general principles and other sources of international law.

The Philippines is a charter member of the United Nations and a signatory to most of the human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

The Universal Declarations of Human Rights in Articles 1 and 3 state:

¹ P. Malanczuk, *Akehurst's Modern Introduction to International Law*, seventh edition.

² UN Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights,
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Pages/WhatareHumanRights.aspx>

Article 1.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 3.

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

These are values which we, as a people, share. Our Constitution resonates with the same ideals. The 1987 Constitution, Articles 2 Sec. 11 reads:

Section 11. The State values the dignity of every human person and guarantees full respect for human rights.

An essential element in the protection of human rights is a widespread knowledge and understanding among people of what their rights are and how they can be defended. Following the adoption and proclamation of the UDHR, the UN General Assembly called upon all Member countries to publicize the text of the Declaration and "to cause it to be disseminated, displayed, read and expounded principally in schools and other educational institutions..."

This Act which aims to create a special working holiday to increase public awareness of the concept of human rights, ensure meaningful observance of the same, and encourage participation in activities that are to be spearheaded by the Commission on Human Rights and the various government offices concerned. ³

Miriam Defensor Santiago
MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO

³ This bill was originally filed in the Fourteenth Congress, Second Regular Session

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1 AN ACT
2 DECLARING DECEMBER TEN OF EVERY YEAR AS A SPECIAL WORKING HOLIDAY
3 TO BE KNOWN AS HUMAN RIGHTS DAY
4

5 *Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Philippines in*
6 *Congress assembled:*
7

8 SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “Human Rights Day Act”.

9 SECTION 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the policy of the state to promote, protect and
10 fulfill the human rights of all its citizens. An essential element in the protection of human rights
11 is a widespread knowledge and understanding among people of what their rights are and how
12 they can be defended.

13 SECTION 3. *Special Working Holiday.* – In recognition of the need to establish a
14 comprehensive national consciousness of human rights, the tenth day of December is hereby
15 declared as a special working holiday to be known as “Human Rights Day”.

16 SECTION 4. *Activities that shall be undertaken in observance of this occasion.* -

17 (a) Heads of government agencies and instrumentalities, government-owned and
18 controlled corporations, local government units and employers in the private sector shall,
19 together with their employees, organize, engage or participate in activities designed to raise
20 public awareness on human rights and human rights violations.

21 (b) The Philippine Information Agency shall be mandated to allocate a minimum of one
22 (1) hour airtime for programs exclusively raising public awareness of human rights. Relative
23 thereto, all Kapisanan ng mga Broadkaster ng Pilipinas-affiliated television and radio networks
24 nationwide are encouraged to allocate airtime for said programs.

1 (c) Commission on Human Rights, the Department of Education, and the Commission
2 on Higher Education, in coordination with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and
3 advocating for human rights, shall lead public and private school communities at all levels in
4 organizing consciousness-raising activities on human rights.

5 They shall translate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights into Filipino, and cause
6 copies of it, in both English and Filipino, to be disseminated, displayed, read and expounded
7 principally in schools and other educational institutions.

8 SECTION 5. *Rules.* - The Commission on Human Rights shall, within sixty (60) days
9 from the effectivity of this Act, promulgate rules and regulations to carry out and enforce the
10 provisions of this Act.

11 SECTION 6. *Appropriations.* - The amount necessary for the initial implementation of
12 this Act shall be charged against the appropriations of the Commission on Human Rights.
13 Thereafter, such sum as may be necessary for its full implementation shall be included in the
14 annual General Appropriations Act as a distinct and separate item.

15 SECTION 7. *Separability Clause.* - If any provision or part hereof, is held invalid or
16 unconstitutional, the remainder of the Act or the provision not otherwise affected shall remain
17 valid and subsisting.

18 SECTION 8. *Repealing Clause.* - Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive
19 order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule or regulation contrary to, or inconsistent
20 with the provisions of this Act is hereby repealed, modified or amended accordingly.

21 SECTION 9. *Effectivity Clause.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
22 publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

23 Approved,

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