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SENATE  
P. S. R. No. 912

RECEIVED BY

Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

RESOLUTION  
DIRECTING THE PROPER SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY,  
IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE ALLEGED NEED TO REVIEW THE  
OBJECTIVES, MEASURES, AND GUIDELINES USED TO RESCUE STREET  
CHILDREN

WHEREAS, the Constitution, Article 2, Section 9 provides: The State shall promote a just and dynamic social order that will ensure the prosperity and independence of the nation and free the people from poverty through policies that provide adequate social services, promote full employment, a rising standard of living, and an improved quality of life for all;

WHEREAS, the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* in its 26 February 2009 issue reported that the government's method of rescuing street children is ineffective;

WHEREAS, the report alleged that Catherine Scerri, an Australian volunteer for six years for the nongovernmental organization Bahay Tuluyan said that government operations to rescue street children has gotten worse as the number of "rescues" increases;

WHEREAS, it was alleged that overall the operations have become ineffective, indiscriminate, involuntary, done for the wrong reasons, and seen by the supposed beneficiaries as arrests;

WHEREAS, it was reported that a van, called Ikot Star, donated by The Australian and New Zealand Association, goes to four areas in Manila where there are a significant number of street children and the volunteers provide alternative education, give first aid and food, and interview the children about their concerns;

WHEREAS, Scerri reportedly claimed, however, that the government rescue operations see the children as eyesores that need to be kept off the streets; with batons, handcuffs, and guns sometimes used in these operations, the children therefore see them as arrests and not rescues;

WHEREAS, Scerri also reportedly said that about 30 percent of those who were rescued were sleeping, so the children who would wake up in the shelters thought they were kidnapped;

WHEREAS, Scerri noted that the operations must be about child protection and their safety, and not simply as a means to keep the streets clean;

WHEREAS, to show the ineffectiveness of the government program, Scerri narrated the story of a street child who has been rescued 59 times, but kept returning to the streets;

WHEREAS, Scerri also noted that the failure of the operations could be attributed to the short term goals set by the implementers of the program, adding also that there is a massive lack of services that have contributed to the current situation of street children;

WHEREAS, she alleged that children and their families need in-city, low-cost housing; alternative education; and affordable health services;

WHEREAS, Scerri also reportedly added that children cannot be forced to live in shelters; hence, any solution must involve knowing the kids since many of them live in the streets and have learned to survive there and they may not be able to survive in a residential setting;

WHEREAS, the 1998 estimates of the Department of Social Welfare and Development put the number of street children in 65 major cities in the country at around 220,000;

WHEREAS, these children should not be seen as eyesores but as individuals that need to be rescued and nurtured in order to become better citizens;

WHEREAS, observations by nongovernmental volunteers should be noted and considered when drafting laws that will help lessen the number of street children;

WHEREAS, it is imperative that the State provides the basic needs of its youth, which includes shelter and proper education;

WHEREAS, these rescue operations must be evaluated in order to create measures to which the street children will better respond to;

WHEREFORE, be it hereby resolved by the Philippine Senate, to direct the proper Senate Committee to conduct an inquiry in aid of legislation, on the alleged need to review the objectives, measures, and guidelines used to rescue street children.

Adopted,

  
MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO

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