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

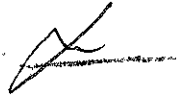S E N A T E

P. S. Res. No.1484   RECEIVED BY

INTRODUCED BY SENATOR VILLAR

RESOLUTION
URGING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON YOUTH, WOMEN AND FAMILY RELATIONS AND OTHER APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES, TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE REPORTED FORCEFUL AND ABUSIVE NATURE OF RESCUE OPERATIONS ACCORDED TO STREET CHILDREN WITH THE END IN VIEW OF CHARTING HUMANE INTERVENTION POLICIES TO ENSURE UPHOLDING THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

Whereas, Article I, Section 2 of Republic Act 7610, or the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act propounds, "It is hereby declared to be the policy of the State to provide special protection to children from all forms of abuse, neglect, cruelty exploitation and discrimination and other conditions... The best interests of children shall be the paramount consideration in all actions concerning them, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities, and legislative bodies, consistent with the principle of First Call for Children as enunciated in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child...XXX;"

Whereas, unofficial statistics estimate the number of street children in the Philippines at 250,000, with 50,000 of them highly visible;

Whereas, authorities regularly conduct rescue operations of children who play, earn a living or live in the streets;

Whereas, child rights advocates claim that arbitrary arrest and illegal detention and ill-treatment of street children are in the guise of these "rescue operations";

Whereas, according to a study sponsored by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), force is often used on many of the children during "rescues," and sometimes they are sexually abused;

Whereas, the study, entitled "Sagip o Huli?", which is produced by the non-government organization Bahay Tuluyan, revealed that "rescued children face a number of violations [of] their most basic human rights, both as humans and children, throughout nearly all stages of the rescue operation.";

Whereas, the same study also disclosed that rescuers are "frequently unclear about their objectives" and therefore "use inappropriate intervention techniques which unnecessarily criminalize, stigmatize and traumatize children";

Whereas, 599 street children and 14 "rescuers" took part in the said study;

Whereas, Bahay Tuluyan cited the following figures in the study:

- 48 percent of the street kids interviewed said they were dragged or forced into vehicles when they were rescued;

- 24 percent said they were "grabbed" and 19 percent said they "voluntarily went along";

- 42 percent said the authorities chased them, despite a clear policy against chases;

- 35 percent said they were hurt, 9 percent said they were helped, and another 9 percent said they were cared for;

- 15 percent "consented" to the "rescue", 24 percent did not, and 61 percent conceded that they could do nothing;

- 30 percent of the children interviewed said they had been rescued "more than five times" and

- Only 1 percent of the children said the "rescue" was explained to them

Whereas, rescuers are often a collective mix from various agencies – Metro Manila Development Authority, Department of Social Welfare and Development and its local counterparts, barangays and police;

Whereas, rescued children stayed in the shelters for a week, and they had to deal with overcrowding, inadequate bedding, common sleeping quarters, "sleeping on the cement floor", poor sanitation and insufficient food: Now therefore be it

RESOLVED, as it is hereby resolved, to urge the Senate Committee on Youth, Women and Family Relations and other appropriate committees, to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the reported forceful and abusive nature of rescue operations accorded to street children with the end in view of charting humane intervention policies to ensure upholding the rights of children.

Adopted,

MANNY VILLAR
Senator

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