

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



Senate
Office of the Secretary

'13 JUL 23 AIO :03

SENATE
P.S. Resolution No. 97

REY: [Signature]

INTRODUCED BY SEN. JINGGOY EJERCITO ESTRADA

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, EMPLOYMENT AND HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, IN CONNECTION WITH THE ALLEGED SEX-FOR-FLIGHT SCHEME OR THE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF OFWs IN THE MIDDLE EAST BY PHILIPPINE EMBASSY OFFICIALS IN EXCHANGE FOR REPATRIATION

Whereas, the 1987 Philippine Constitution, recognizing the significant role of labor, both local and overseas, in nation-building and as the State's primary social economic force, succinctly provides:

"Article II, Section 18. The State affirms labor as a primary social economic force. It shall protect the rights of workers and promote their welfare.

Article XIII, Section 3. The State shall afford full protection to labor, local and overseas, organized and unorganized, and promote full employment and equality of employment opportunities for all. x x x";

Whereas, said constitutional labor provisions were echoed in Section 2 paragraph (b) of Republic Act No. 8042, otherwise known as the "Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995" when it states that it is the policy of the State "to afford full protection to labor, local and overseas, organized and unorganized, and promote full employment and equality of employment to all. Toward this end, the State shall provide adequate and timely social, economic and legal services to Filipino migrant workers";

Whereas, on 18 June 2013, Akbayan Rep. Walden Bello shocked the nation with his expose that Philippine Embassy officials in various posts in the Middle East are sexually abusing and prostituting distressed overseas Filipino workers. The Philippine Embassy officials supposedly promise their hapless victims that they will be prioritized in repatriation in exchange for sexual favors;

Whereas, much worse, most of these OFWs are sheltered in Philippine government's halfway houses where they sought for assistance and protection, but were instead abused and harmed by the very officials whom they were hoping to help them;

Whereas, the following were allegedly branded as predators or the perpetrators of this sex-for-repatriation scheme: Mario Antonio (Assistant Labor Attache in Jordan),

Blas Marquez (local hire or contractual employee of the POLO in Kuwait) and a certain "Kim" (member of the augmentation team of the DFA at the Philippine Embassy in Damascus, Syria);

Whereas, after the sex-for-repatriation expose was made, victims have been emboldened and started to come out to reveal their ordeal in the hands of labor and embassy officials in the Middle East. In fact, three (3) victims tagged another alleged perpetrator in the name of Antonio Villafuerte, Assistant Labor Attache in Riyadh;

Whereas, talks about this deplorable scheme has been going around and recurring for years now, but has remained unconfirmed because no one has taken the courage to file complaints against the erring officials;

Whereas, both the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) have conducted an investigation into this monstrous and evil scheme;

Whereas, while the DFA has yet to make public the result of their investigation, the DOLE's fact-finding team has recently completed its mission abroad and announced that it dismissed Blas Marquez and recalled labor attachés Mario Antonio and Antonio Villafuerte from their posts;

Whereas, despite these developments, numerous migrant workers' rights groups are calling for an independent high level investigation on this sex-for-repatriation scheme;

Whereas, it is incumbent upon the Senate to scrutinize and address this issue with the end in view of reviewing and strengthening our labor laws not only to give justice to the recent victims but also to prevent other OFWs from falling prey into the hands of the perpetrators of such or other similar schemes;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED by the **Senate**, to direct the Committee on Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, in connection with the alleged sex-for-flight scheme or the sexual exploitation of OFWs in the Middle East by Philippine Embassy Officials in exchange for repatriation.

Adopted,


JINGGOY EJERCITO ESTRADA
Senator