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SENATE  
P. S. R. No. **885**

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Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

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RESOLUTION  
DIRECTING THE PROPER SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID  
OF LEGISLATION, ON THE REPORTED ARREST OF SUSPECTS INVOLVED IN A  
“SEXTORTION” SYNDICATE IN BULACAN PROVINCE THAT INVOLVE MINORS IN  
THEIR OPERATIONS

WHEREAS, the Constitution, Article 2, Section 11 provides: “The State values the dignity of every human person and guarantees full respect for human rights;”

WHEREAS, Republic Act No. 9208, also known as Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003, declares as policy that “the State values the dignity of every human person and guarantees the respect of individual rights. In pursuit of this policy, the State shall give highest priority to the enactment of measures and development of programs that will promote human dignity, protect the people from any threat of violence and exploitation, eliminate trafficking in persons, and mitigate pressures for involuntary migration and servitude of persons, not only to support trafficked persons but more importantly, to ensure their recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration into the mainstream of society;”

WHEREAS, Republic Act No. 10175, or the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012, declares as policy that that the State needs “to protect and safeguard the integrity of computer, computer and communications systems, networks, and databases, and the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of information and data stored therein, from all forms of misuse, abuse, and illegal access by making punishable under the law such conduct or conducts;” and that “in this light, the State shall adopt sufficient powers to effectively prevent and combat such offenses by facilitating their detection, investigation, and prosecution at both the domestic and international levels, and by providing arrangements for fast and reliable international cooperation;”

WHEREAS, an article posted in Interaksyon.com on 22 August 2014 and updated the following day reported that the Philippine National Police (PNP) arrested eight suspects and rescued five minors during an operation against a so-called “sextortion” syndicate in two towns of Bulacan Province, which also led to the seizure of 106 pieces of electronic evidence by the police operatives;

WHEREAS, it was said that the operation, conducted on 21 August 2014 and dubbed “Operation Strikeback 2”, was a joint effort of the PNP Anti-Cybercrime Group (ACG), Central Luzon Police, the Special Action Force (SAF), and Interpol targeting a syndicate in based in San Jose del Monte City and the first-class municipality of Norzagaray in Bulacan;

WHEREAS, it was reported that the operation was a follow-up mission of Operation "Strikeback" in April 2014, in which 58 suspects were arrested, and marked by strong international cooperation, collaboration, and coordination in dealing with cybercrime;

WHEREAS, the operation was reportedly launched following PNP Case Operational Plan (COPlan) "GOYA", the PNP's campaign against sex extortion activities in the country;

WHEREAS, it was reported that the modus operandi sex extortion or "sextortion" operations involve befriending potential victims via social media, such as Facebook, and luring them into committing lewd acts online via video call software like Skype; the actions of the unwitting victims are recorded and then used to blackmail them

WHEREAS, PNP officials reportedly said that the suspects used social media web sites such as Facebook to acquaint with people overseas, and then used video call services, such as Skype, to engage in cybersex; the suspects would then demand that the victim pay a huge amount of money, going as high as US \$30,000, or the footage would be made public on social media or even sent to the victim's friends or relatives;

WHEREAS, it was reported that the sextortion ring allegedly use a remittance agency to channel money extorted from the victims, and it was reported that a relative of one of the suspects allegedly run a popular money exchange outlet;

WHEREAS, it was reported that the group initially used women to lure victims, and later recruited five minors; PNP officials reportedly said that the minors have since been turned over to social workers, and that the suspects would be charged with human trafficking along with extortion;

WHEREAS, Interpol reportedly warned that sextortion has emerged as a major concern in recent years as criminals take advantage of more people using social media and greater mobile Internet access via smartphones;

WHEREAS, PNP officials claimed that the Internet extortion racket compromised hundreds of victims in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Macau, and it was said that and the arrests were made due to complaints from victims;

WHEREAS, PNP officials also claim that the operation is considered the second large-scale arrest of suspects for sextortion;

WHEREAS, according to PNP officials, the agency is investigating whether this new group was related to a larger but similar sextortion operation that was broken up by police in May 2014, where dozens of people operating from industrial-sized call centers were arrested after allegedly blackmailing hundreds of people around the world, luring them on social media in order to get sexually explicit information or images;

WHEREAS, a recent development unravelled by the recent police operation was said to be the discovery of minors being used as video chatters to lure victims, as it was reported that one of the rescued minors said she was recruited with the promise of high income, and she reportedly received ₱70,000 as a chatter in her first three days of work;

WHEREAS, PNP officials claim that the sextortion operations has become more mobile, and the perpetrators conduct their activities in their homes if they have a strong enough Internet connection;

WHEREAS, since the arrested suspects will reportedly be charged with robbery and extortion, and violations of the R.A. No. 9208 and R.A. No. 10175, Congress should consider strengthening these laws and their enforcement in light of the developments of criminal activities that involve different pieces of legislation;

WHEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED IN THE PHILIPPINE SENATE to direct the proper Senate committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the reported arrest of suspects involved in a "sextortion" syndicate in Bulacan Province that involve minors in their operations.

Adopted,

*acsc*   
MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO

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