

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



Senate  
Office of the Secretary

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SENATE  
P. S. R. No. 1033

RECEIVED BY: 

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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 MALTREATMENT AND NEGLIGENCE OF  
STREET CHILDREN IN A SHELTER IN THE CITY OF MANILA

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, furthermore, Article 2, Section 15 states that, "The State shall protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them";

WHEREAS, Inquirer.net, in an article posted on 16 November 2014, reported that officials running a local government facility in Manila that is supposed to shelter and nurture street children have been criticized for acts of negligence and maltreatment;

WHEREAS, the Manila Reception and Action Center (RAC), located at Villegas Street in Ermita, has been likened to a concentration camp and reported twice for the deplorable treatment of children they take in;

WHEREAS, the RAC is operated by the Manila Social Welfare Department and was established about 30 years ago as a place where the police or village watchmen can bring child vagrants and beggars;

WHEREAS, a photograph of a naked boy, lying on the pavement and reduced to skin and bones, which shows the lack of care that the children like him have been receiving, was reportedly included on the third complaint submitted to the Manila City Hall by Bahay Tuluyan, a non-government organization promoting children's rights;

WHEREAS, Bahay Tuluyan claimed that based on evidence it has gathered, the boy was found abandoned in Paco on March 8 and brought to RAC, where, after seven months, staff members have yet to determine his real name, age and address;

WHEREAS, according to the report, the RAC cited lack of funds for medical treatment to explain the boy's pitiful state;

WHEREAS, Bahay Tuluyan has also been quoted in the news as saying that it has written a series of letters to Manila Mayor Joseph Estrada and MSWD chief Shiela Maria Lacuna-Pangan starting February, urging the officials to either improve conditions at the RAC or close the place down;

WHEREAS, the organizations claimed that aside from suffering from poor health and nutrition, children have also been physically abused, assaulted and even tortured by the RAC staff;

WHEREAS, according to Inquirer.net, these incidents largely went unreported, noting that in cases where victims were subjected to medical examinations, the resulting reports were superficial because the examination was done in the presence of the same officials who had beaten up the child, thereby inhibiting disclosure of the injuries;

WHEREAS, the report said that bullying between the resident children themselves has also been rampant and is being tolerated at the center;

WHEREAS, Catherine Scerri, deputy director of Bahay Tuluyan, allegedly said that the place can accommodate about 100 people, but on any given day there can be as many as 400 there;

WHEREAS, the report also said that while Scerri admits that the case of the boy in the photograph may be considered isolated, it has been established that the problems at the RAC are systemic;

WHEREAS, according to the news, Scerri is of the belief that children may be safer and more capable of fending for themselves out in the streets than inside the center, where they only end up traumatized;

WHEREAS, it is imperative that further investigation be made to determine the veracity of reports of maltreatment and negligence in the center;

WHEREAS, Congress, in coordination with concerned agencies, should review existing laws on the rehabilitation of street children;

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 report of maltreatment and negligence of street children in a shelter in the city of Manila.

Adopted,

  
MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO  
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