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SENATE
P. S. R. No. 1727

RECEIVED BY: 

Introduced by SENATOR CYNTHIA A. VILLAR

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE STATUS OF THE REPORTED TWENTY THREE MILLION PESOS (Php 23,000,000.00) THAT WAS RAISED SUPPOSEDLY TO SERVE AS "BLOOD MONEY" TO SAVE THE LIFE OF JOSELITO ZAPANTA, AN OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKER (OFW) CONVICTED FOR A FELONY AND WHO EVENTUALLY RECEIVED THE DEATH PENALTY IN SAUDI ARABIA, WITH THE END IN VIEW OF ADOPTING THE NECESSARY STRATEGIES, POLICIES AND MEASURES IN UNDERTAKING CONCERTED EFFORTS TO SAVE OFWS ON DEATH ROW, UNDER JUSTIFIABLE CIRCUMSTANCES, INCLUDING THE MATTER OF RAISING "BLOOD MONEY", ITS ALLOCATION TO PAY THE VICTIMS, AS WELL AS THE POSSIBLE UTILIZATION THEREOF FOR OTHER WORTHY PROGRAMS IN THE EVENT IT COULD NOT BE USED ANYMORE FOR THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH IT WAS INTENDED

WHEREAS, Article XII, Section 3 of the Philippine Constitution in part states that "The State shall afford full protection to labor, local and overseas, x x x";

WHEREAS, Section 2 (a) of Republic Act No. 8042 or the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995, as amended by Republic Act No. 10022, states that, "In the pursuit of an independent foreign policy and while considering national sovereignty, territorial integrity, national interest and the right to self-determination paramount in its relations with other states, the State shall, at all times, uphold the dignity of its citizens, whether in country or overseas, in general, and Filipino worker, in particular, x x x";

WHEREAS, in May 2009, Mr. Joselito Zapanta, a 35-year old Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, was charged with the crime of murder with robbery for killing his Sudanese landlord over a rent dispute and for taking the latter's mobile phone as well as some cash;

WHEREAS, court proceedings ensued and on 13 April 2010, Mr. Zapanta was convicted by the Riyadh Grand Court for the crime charged, punishable with the penalty of death;

WHEREAS, the family of the Sudanese victim initially demanded "blood money" in the amount of Five Million Saudi Rial, which was later reduced to Four Million Saudi Rial or the equivalent of Forty Eight Million Pesos (Php 48,000,000.00);

WHEREAS, "Blood money", under Shariah Law, is compensation given to the family of murder victims for them to forgive the offender so that the latter may no longer be sentenced to death;

WHEREAS, it was reported that the aggregate amount of Twenty Three Million Pesos (Php 23,000,000.00) was raised, through donations, to serve as "blood money" to pay the family of the Sudanese victim, but such amount was found to be insufficient to pay the blood money demanded by the family of the Sudanese victim;

WHEREAS, the Department of Foreign Affairs has conveyed that the Philippine government has exhausted all diplomatic and legal efforts to save the life of Mr. Zapanta and in fact, no less than President Benigno S. Aquino III has written a letter to King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia to appeal for compassion and deferment of the execution of Mr. Zapanta;

WHEREAS, the family of the Sudanese victim has not signified intention to execute a *Tanazal* or an Affidavit of Forgiveness, which could possibly stall the death sentence of Mr. Zapanta;

WHEREAS, due to the absence of a *Tanazal*, Mr. Zapanta was eventually executed on 29 December 2015 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia;

WHEREAS, Mr. Zapanta left behind two (2) children, aged 13 and 10, who are bereft of means to support their education and upkeep;

WHEREAS, there are inquiries on the status of the fund raised in the aggregate amount of twenty three million pesos (Php23,000,000.00) supposedly intended as "blood money" to save the life of Mr. Zapanta, but was not utilized for the purpose as there are stakeholders who believe that that it could instead be allocated to serve some other worthy causes, such as to help the children of Mr. Zapanta or other OFWs on death row;

WHEREAS, there is a need to adopt the necessary strategies, policies and measures in undertaking concerted efforts to save OFWs on death row, under justifiable circumstances, including raising "blood money", its allocation to pay the victims, as well as the possible utilization thereof for other worthy programs in the event it could not be used anymore for the purpose for which it was intended;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, to direct the appropriate Senate committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the status of the reported Twenty Three Million Pesos (Php23,000,000.00) that was raised supposedly as "blood money" to save the life of Joselito Zapanta, an OFW convicted for a felony and who was eventually meted with a penalty of death in Saudi Arabia, with the end in view of adopting the necessary strategies, policies and measures in undertaking concerted efforts to save OFWs on death row, under justifiable circumstances, including the matter of raising "blood money", its allocation to pay the victims, as well as the possible utilization thereof for other worthy programs in the event it could not be used anymore for the purpose for which it was intended.

Adopted,


CYNTHIA A. VILLAR