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SENATE

P.S. Res. No. 187

RECEIVED BY: WV

Introduced by Sen. Juan Miguel F. Zubiri

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEES TO CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE ELABORATE SCHEME INVOLVED IN FACILITATING PASSAGE TO MECCA TO FOREIGN NATIONALS USING PHILIPPINE DOCUMENTS PARTICULARLY THE CASE OF INDONESIAN NATIONALS WHO POSED AS FILIPINOS AND ATTEMPTED TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY TO ATTEND THE HAJJ PILGRIMAGE

WHEREAS, on August 18, 2016, 177 Indonesian nationals were arrested in the Ninoy Aquino International Airport by the immigration police for possessing illegally obtained Philippine passports;

WHEREAS, with Philippine passports and plane tickets, said foreign nationals posed as Filipinos on the mandatory Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca and attempted to check in an early morning special flight of Philippine Airlines bound for Madinah, Saudi Arabia, but their inability to speak any Filipino dialect raised alarm among immigration officers on duty;

WHEREAS, five (5) Filipinos who accompanied the Indonesians allegedly provided them real but fraudulently obtained passports for a fee of \$6000 to \$10,000 each to join the pilgrimage under a quota the Saudi government reserves for Filipino pilgrims.

WHEREAS, pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca, at least once in one's lifetime, is the Fifth Pillar of Islam and it is mandatory for every Muslim provided that he or she is physically and financially able to do so;

WHEREAS, to limit the number of pilgrims coming to Mecca, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia allocates a quota, to countries with Muslim population, Indonesia, being the country with the largest number of Muslims in the world, has an allocation of 168,800 pilgrims, while the Philippines has a quota of 8,000.

WHEREAS, other nationals who cannot be accommodated in their country's quota use Philippine quota to join pilgrimage using spurious documents to acquire Philippine passports;

WHEREAS, in a news articles on August 23, 2016 Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs Retno Marsudi claims that the detained Indonesians were victims of an organized crime and that they were made to pay illegal travel agencies to facilitate and process their documentary requirements and travel;

WHEREAS, the head of the Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of South Sulawesi, Abdul Wahid Tahir, explained that hundreds of prospective pilgrims enter into the

Philippines using our visa-free facility and once in the country, they are given a Philippine passport to leave for Saudi Arabia;

WHEREAS, one of the detained Indonesian pilgrims divulged that she paid the total of 120 million Indonesian Rupiah, the equivalent of Php421,568, and went to Malaysia by sea and was flown to the country where she, along with other pilgrims from Indonesia, were scheduled to fly to Saudi Arabia before they were prevented by Philippine authorities to leave Manila;

WHEREAS, according to some of our Filipino Muslim brothers, this practice of foreign Muslims using Philippine passports has been going on for quite sometime, and that the Philippine delegation to Mecca during Hajj always includes foreign nationals;

WHEREAS, this issue raises concern as to news reports say that passports used by detained foreign nationals are genuine and issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Philippine passports were acquired using documents such as birth certificates issued by the National Statistics Office;

WHEREAS, there is a need to look into this matter and put a halt at this organized scheme involving government officials and employees that pry on our Muslim brethren and jeopardize as well as compromise our country's main and primary travel document making it an easy accessory for the perpetration of crimes and acts of terrorism;

RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, that the Senate of the Philippines direct the appropriate Senate committees to conduct an investigation, in aid of legislation, on the elaborate scheme involved in facilitating passage to Mecca to foreign nationals using Philippine documents such as the case of Indonesian nationals who posed as Filipinos and attempted to leave the country to attend the Hajj pilgrimage.

Adopted,



JUAN MIGUEL F. ZUBIRI