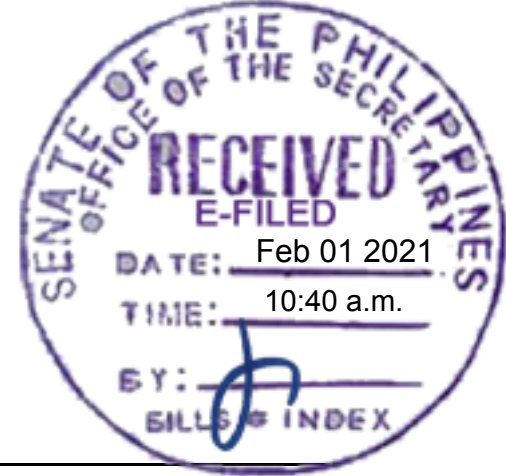


EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)  
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES )  
*Second Regular Session* )



**SENATE**  
**P.S. Resolution No. 627**

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Introduced by **SENATOR IMEE R. MARCOS**

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**RESOLUTION**

**DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, INTO THE ALARMING REPORTS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING, ABUSE, RAPE, AND IMPRISONMENT INVOLVING OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS IN THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE ALLEGATIONS OF MISTREATMENT OF THE SAID VICTIMS BY THE PHILIPPINE EMBASSY IN DAMASCUS, SYRIA AND ITS FAILURE TO IMMEDIATELY EFFECT THEIR REPATRIATION THEREBY CAUSING FURTHER DISTRESS AND HARDSHIP TO THE OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS**

**WHEREAS**, Article II, Section 11 of the 1987 Constitution provides that "*the State values the dignity of every human person and guarantees full respect for human rights.*" Further, Art. XIII of the same Constitution provides for full protection to labor, local and overseas, organized and unorganized, and promote full employment and equality of employment opportunities for all;

**WHEREAS**, Republic Act No. 8042 otherwise known as the "*Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995*", as amended, provides that the State shall provide adequate and timely social, economic, and legal services to Filipino migrant workers. Moreover, said Act provides that free access to the courts and quasi-judicial bodies and adequate legal assistance shall not be denied to any person by reason of poverty;

**WHEREAS**, Republic Act No. 10364, otherwise known as the "*Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2012*", reiterates that the State values the dignity of every human person, guarantees the respect of individual rights, and give highest priority to the enactment of measures and development of programs that will promote human dignity, protect people from any threat of violence and exploitation, eliminate trafficking in persons, and mitigate pressures for involuntary migration and servitude of persons;

**WHEREAS**, it shall be the policy of the State to recognize the equal rights and inherent human dignity of women and men as enshrined in the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights, United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, United Nations Convention on the Protection of Migrant Workers and their Families, United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime

Including its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children and other relevant and universally accepted human rights instruments and other international conventions to which the Philippines is a signatory;

**WHEREAS**, despite the series of repatriations due to loss of employment brought about by business reverses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, a significant number of OFWs are still deployed elsewhere in different parts of the world for employment;

**WHEREAS**, according to a survey by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), in 2019, 2.2 million Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) worked abroad at any time during April to September 2019 of which 96.8% had existing work contracts while 3.2% worked overseas without any contract;

**WHEREAS**, said survey also reflects that the Middle East continues to be the leading destination for OFWs which reflects 22.4%, followed by the United Arab Emirates with 13.2%;

**WHEREAS**, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) reported that the Department has assisted 6,772 potential trafficking victims identified by overseas missions. Meanwhile, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has assisted 2,788 victims of trafficking or illegal recruitment, of which a reported 68% increase from the previous year occurred;

**WHEREAS**, an article by The Washington Post entitled, "*Sold into Syrian servitude, Filipina workers tell of abuse, rape and imprisonment*," published on 25 January 2021, where an OFW, Josephine Tawaging, recalled her story wherein she was supposed to be working in Dubai however, upon arriving, Tawaging's recruitment agency locked her instead in a dark and dirty dormitory with several other women, who soon learned they were to be sent to the war-ravaged Syria to be sold;

**WHEREAS**, dozens of Filipina overseas workers who were recruited to work in Dubai or the United Arab Emirates have been trafficked to Syria to work as maids where at times some are subjected to physical and sexual attacks by the employers or denied the promised salaries;

**WHEREAS**, such story raised an alarming concern to the fate of some unfortunate OFWs who became victims of human trafficking, abuse, rape, and imprisonment in the Middle East particularly in Syria;

**WHEREAS**, the said article by the Washington Post further reported that many trafficked OFWs who escaped from their employers' home fled to the Philippine Embassy in Damascus, Syria but "were not greeted with the sanctuary they had hoped for" by certain personnel of the Embassy;

**WHEREAS**, the same article noted that the trafficked OFWs described the embassy personnel as strict, denying them breakfast for two weeks as a punishment

for minor offenses, such as sneaking extra food from the kitchen. They are also being housed in a dormitory-style rooms that are cold in winter and locked inside each night;

**WHEREAS**, the reports also stated that some of the trafficked OFWs had been stuck at the Philippine Embassy in Damascus, Syria for as long as two years because they were unable to obtain Syrian exit Visas and money for flights back home. Some of them reported being pressured by the embassy staff members to return to the Syrian households they have escaped from;

**WHEREAS**, the root cause of human trafficking cases in Syria involving Filipino Muslim sisters may be traced to the poverty incidence in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) which is estimated at 60 to 65%;

**WHEREAS**, it is imperative that an effective mechanism be instituted to ensure that the rights and interests of distressed OFWs, documented or undocumented, are adequately protected and safeguarded;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED**, directing the appropriate Senate committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, into the alarming reports of human trafficking, abuse, rape, and imprisonment involving Overseas Filipino Workers in the Middle East, including the allegations of mistreatment of the said victims by the Philippine Embassy in Damascus, Syria and its failure to immediately effect their repatriation thereby causing further distress and hardship to Overseas Filipino Workers.

*Adopted,*

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Imee R. Marcos", with a horizontal line underneath it.

**IMEE R. MARCOS**