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SENATE

P. S. RES. No. 977

RECEIVED BY: MS

Introduced by SEN. WIN GATCHALIAN

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE ALLEGED HUMAN TRAFFICKING, SERIOUS ILLEGAL DETENTION, AND PHYSICAL ABUSE AND TORTURE IN THE PREMISES OF AN INTERNET GAMING LICENSEE OF PHILIPPINE AMUSEMENT GAMING CORPORATION (PAGCOR) IN TARLAC, WITH AN END VIEW OF CRAFTING A LEGISLATION OR POLICY RECOMMENDATION, AS MAY BE NECESSARY

1 WHEREAS, on 13 March 2024, the Presidential Anti-Organized Crime
2 Commission (PAOCC) led the team that conducted a raid on the premises of Zuan
3 Yuan Technology, Inc., a grantee of a provisional internet gaming licensee (IGL) of
4 PAGCOR as of 07 March 2024¹, located in Tarlac City². The operating units accounted
5 for 875 workers, of which 371 are Filipinos, 432 are Chinese, 57 are Vietnamese, 8
6 are Malaysians, 2 are Rwandans, 2 are Indonesians and 3 Taiwanese³;

7 WHEREAS, the raid was based on two search and seizure warrants⁴ issued by
8 Presiding Judge Hermenegildo Dumlao II of the Regional Trial Court Third Judicial
9 Region Branch 81 in Malolos, Bulacan⁵, due to a complaint for physical injuries and

¹ PAGCOR: "List of Internet Gaming Licensees", available at: <https://www.pagcor.ph/regulatory/pdf/offshore/List-of-Internet-Gaming-Licensees.pdf> (Date last accessed: 18 March 2024).

² Manabat, J., Rappler: "Authorities raid POGO compound in Tarlac over alleged human trafficking", available at: <https://www.rappler.com/nation/luzon/raid-pogo-compound-tarlac-march-13-2024/> (Date last accessed: 18 March 2024).

³ *Id.*

⁴ Caliwan, C., Philippine News Agency: "875 workers rescued in Tarlac POGO raid", available at: <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1220694> (Date last accessed: 18 March 2024).

⁵ Manabat, J., *supra* note 2.

1 serious illegal detention⁶ filed by a Vietnamese national who escaped from the
2 compound of the Philippine Offshore Gaming Operator (POGO) on 28 February 2024⁷;

3 WHEREAS, the aforementioned Vietnamese escapee was allegedly manhandled
4 and electrocuted naked while being held in the compound⁸;

5 WHEREAS, the Malaysians rescued likewise bore signs of physical torture and
6 physical abuse⁹;

7 WHEREAS, the same POGO compound in Bamban town, Tarlac province, was
8 also raided last 01 February 2024. The raid was based on a warrant to search, seize,
9 and examine computer data, issued by Judge Maria Roma Flor Ortiz of the Regional
10 Trial Court Branch 63 in Tarlac, for alleged operation of a fraudulent cryptocurrency
11 investment scams shielded under the guise of a legitimate, licensed offshore gaming
12 operation. Hongsheng Gaming Technology, Inc., a PAGCOR licensed has allegedly
13 violated provisions of the Securities Regulations Code of the Philippines and of the
14 Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012¹⁰;

15 WHEREAS, based on the new Internet Gaming Licensing Regulations issued by
16 PAGCOR which took effect on 12 July 2023¹¹, one of the qualifications for eligibility of
17 an internet gaming licensee is (1) to be of good repute, considering character,
18 honesty, and integrity and (2) it must not be associated with any person who is not
19 of good repute or has undesirable or unsatisfactory financial resources. The good
20 repute requirement was mandatory even when the old PAGCOR Offshore Gaming
21 Regulatory Manual¹² was in effect; yet despite consistent and specific regulations,

⁶ GMA Integrated News: "Nearly 300 foreigners caught at Tarlac scam hub brought to Metro Manila", available at: <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/900758/nearly-300-foreigners-caught-at-tarlac-scam-hub-brought-to-metro-manila/story/> (Date last accessed: 18 March 2024).

⁷ Manabat, J., *supra* note 2.

⁸ Reyes, J., Daily Tribune: "PAOCC rescues trapped workers", available at: <https://tribune.net.ph/2024/03/13/paocc-rescues-trapped-workers> (Date last accessed: 18 March 2024).

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ Malig, J., Inquirer: "CIDG raids Pogo firm in Tarlac; rounds up 850 foreign, Filipino employees"; available at: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1724643/cidg-raids-pogo-firm-in-tarlac-rounds-up-850-foreign-filipino-employees> (Date last accessed: 19 March 2024).

¹¹ PAGCOR: "Internet Gaming Licensing Regulations" (12 July 2023), available at: <https://www.pagcor.ph/regulatory/pdf/offshore/Internet-Gaming-Licensing-Regulations.pdf> (Date last accessed: 18 March 2024).

¹² PAGCOR: "Offshore Gaming Regulatory Manual" (03 July 2018), available at: <https://www.pagcor.ph/regulatory/pdf/offshore/Offshore-Gaming-Regulatory-Manual.pdf> (Date last accessed: 18 March 2024).

1 PAGCOR fails to prevent its licensees and accredited service providers from engaging
2 in illegal activities;

3 WHEREAS, there is a need to review the capacity of PAGCOR to implement its
4 own regulations covering the offshore gaming industry as well as the capability of
5 other law enforcement agencies to abate the commission of human trafficking, serious
6 illegal detention, and physical abuse and torture in the country;

7 WHEREAS, the failure of the concerned government agencies to stop these
8 large-scale human trafficking serious illegal detention, and physical abuse and torture
9 in the country continues to undermine and pose threat to the country's safety and
10 security;

11 WHEREAS, based on the foregoing, there is a need to reiterate the call for
12 action on these human trafficking, serious illegal detention, and physical abuse and
13 torture incidents being linked to IGLs or POGOs;

14 RESOLVED BY THE SENATE, as it is hereby resolved by the Senate, to direct
15 the appropriate Senate Committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the
16 alleged human trafficking, serious illegal detention, and physical abuse and torture
17 perpetuated in Tarlac which is linked to a PAGCOR licensee, with an end view of
18 crafting a legislation or policy recommendation, as may be necessary.

Adopted,



WIN GATCHALIAN