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Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION No. 446



Introduced by
BAYAN MUNA Representatives EUFEMIA C. CULLAMAT,
CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE and FERDINAND R. GAITE,
ACT TEACHERS Party Representative FRANCE L. CASTRO,
Gabriela Women's Party Representative ARLENE D. BROSAS and
Kabataan Party-list Representative SARAH JANE I. ELAGO

RESOLUTION
URGING THE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS TO INVESTIGATE THE
STAGGERING NUMBER OF KILLINGS AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS
AGAINST ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDERS IN THE PHILIPPINES

WHEREAS, the Philippines has been labeled the most dangerous country in the world for environmental defenders according to a published report, released in September 2019, of the international organization Global Witness entitled Defending the Philippines;

WHEREAS, sources state that, in Asia, the Philippines has had the highest number of killings of advocates against illegal logging, destructive mining, and corrupt agribusinesses since 2012;

WHEREAS, according to the report, 30 defenders of land and environment were killed in the Philippines in 2018, the highest number in the world;

WHEREAS, these activities against environmental defenders persist to the present, with fresh reports of harassed, intimidated, and killed farmers, indigenous people, and environmental activists almost every day;

WHEREAS, perpetrators of these acts of violence are rarely brought to justice;

WHEREAS, laws exist in this nation to oblige investing corporations to uphold international, environmentally-friendly standards and to uphold inalienable human and indigenous rights. However, those duty-bound to make sure that such laws are obeyed are either remiss in their responsibility, or willingly complicit in the destruction of the environment and those that defend it;

WHEREAS, Investment Defense Forces, composed of elements from the military and paramilitary groups have been guarding mines and plantations since their creation was ordered by then President

1 Arroyo in 2008. From their inception, these forces have protected private interest, quashing any
2 opposition. The current administration, along with its apparent priorities, has simply encouraged this
3 to continue;

4 **WHEREAS**, President Duterte initially expressed a commitment to protecting the environment.
5 This was evidenced by his appointment of former Department of Environment and Natural
6 Resources (DENR) Secretary, the late Gina Lopez. She enacted the closure of several destructive
7 mines before her appointment was rejected;

8 **WHEREAS**, it appears that any progress former Secretary Lopez made is being repealed by the
9 current actions of the DENR, in conjunction with the rest of the government;

10 **WHEREAS**, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), a government commission
11 tasked with defending the rights of indigenous Filipinos, consistently sides with businesses instead of
12 implementing its mandate. It is marred with accusations of corruption;

13 **WHEREAS**, corporate projects in the country often commence without obtaining the necessary
14 full, free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) of affected communities. It is part of NCIP's
15 responsibility to make sure that this consent is obtained from indigenous communities;

16 **WHEREAS**, a third of the environmental defenders killed since June 2016 have been indigenous
17 peoples;

18 **WHEREAS**, the Duterte administration has made it apparent that short-term profit is its top
19 priority, shirking its commitment to protecting the environment and the natural resources within,
20 and in turn, shirking its responsibility to the Filipino people;

21 **WHEREAS**, the Duterte administration has fostered a climate in which the rich and powerful are
22 emboldened to eliminate those they see as obstacles to their economic growth with excessive force,
23 and without fear of consequence;

24 **WHEREAS**, to cite few crimes contained in the report, on July 1, 2016, two men alighted from a
25 motorcycle in front of Gloria Capitan's karaoke bar in Bataan. One of them proceeded to shoot her
26 thrice, killing her. This was witnessed by two of her grandchildren, one of whom was grazed by a
27 bullet. Capitan was the president of the Samahan ng Nagkakaisang Mamamayan ng Lucanin
28 (SNML), an affiliate of the Coal Free Bataan Movement (CFBM). These organizations were
29 protesting Seafront Shipyard and Port Terminal Services Corporation's (Seafront) operation without
30 proper permission, and its subsequent pollution of Manila Bay;

31 **WHEREAS**, on October 10, 2016 in Compostela Valley, Jimmy Saypan, secretary general of the
32 Compostela Farmers Association (CFA) and a detractor of mining in the area, was shot in the torso
33 by two armed men on a motorcycle. He died in the hospital the following day. He had already
34 survived two (2) more attempts at his life that same year and had previously received verbal threats
35 from military officials linked to Agusan Petroleum and Mineral Corporation (AgPet);

36 **WHEREAS**, on February 3, 2017, Renato Anglao, a Lumad leader, was shot in Quezon, Bukidnon
37 by 3 unidentified gunmen on a motorcycle. This was in the presence of his wife and child. Anglao
38 was the secretary general of the Tribal Indigenous Oppressed Group Association (TINDOGA), and

1 was an advocate against land-grabbing. TINDOGA demanded that their ancestral land be returned
2 by Mayor Pablo Lorenzo III, who supplies pineapples for Dole Philippines;

3 **WHEREAS**, on September 14, 2017, Ruben Arzaga was shot in the head while attempting to
4 confiscate illegal timber in Palawan. The Villarosa brothers, known illegal loggers, were arrested for
5 this incident. Arzaga was a member of the Palawan NGO Network Incorporated (PNNI), an
6 organization that enforces environmental laws and consistently butts heads with Palawan Governor
7 Jose Alvarez. PNNI has reported that 12 of their members have been killed since 2001;

8 **WHEREAS**, on August 5, 2019, American human rights and indigenous peoples' rights advocate,
9 Brandon Lee, was shot in front of his house in Lagawe, Ifugao. He was a volunteer of the Cordillera
10 Human Rights Alliance (CHRA) and the Ifugao Peasant Movement. Lee was last reported to have
11 been hospitalized and in critical condition;

12 **WHEREAS**, on August 23 2019, Bai Leah Tumbalang, a leader of the lumad people and staunch
13 defender of their ancestral lands was shot dead by one of two (2) men riding a red motorcycle in
14 Valencia City, Bukidnon. She was a member of Kaugalingong Sistema Igpapasindog tu Lumadnong
15 Ogpaan (KASILO) and a Bayan Muna partylist organizer. This had been the 14th recorded incident
16 of an extra-judicial killing against lumads, farmers, and progressives in Bukidnon in 2019. That
17 number has since increased;

18 **WHEREAS**, such impunity in the face of these gross abuses is intolerable. The perpetrators of
19 these acts of violence must be held accountable and be brought to justice;

20 **WHEREAS**, voices that ring true should be heard, not silenced;

21 **WHEREAS**, it should be duly recognized that the Philippines is rich in natural resources. This
22 makes the country appealing to foreign investment. However, the defense and care of the Philippine
23 environment for the Filipino people should take precedence over foreign and big business interests;

24 **WHEREAS**, the environment should be preserved and sustained, for our own sake, and for the
25 sake of future generations;

26

27 **NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED**, that the
28 Committee on Human Rights investigate the large number of killings and human rights violations
29 against environmental defenders in the Philippines.

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31 *Adopted,*

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Rep. EUFEMIA C. CULLAMAT
Bayan Muna Party-list

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Rep. CARLOS IZAGANI T. ZARATE
Bayan Muna Party-list


Rep. FERDINAND R. GAITE
Bayan Muna Party-list


Rep. FRANCE L. CASTRO
ACT Teachers Party


Rep. ARLENE D. BROSAS
Gabriela Women's Party

Rep. SARAH JANE I. ELAGO
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