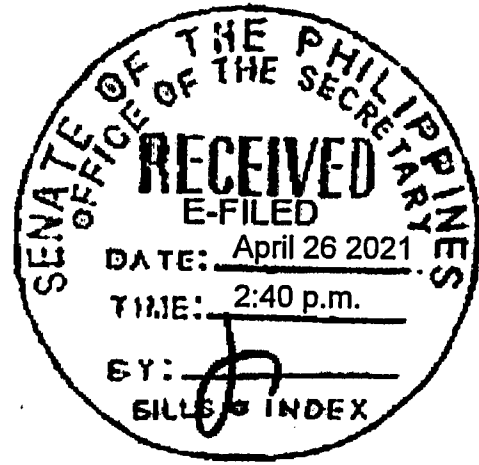


EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Second Regular Session)

SENATE

P. S. RES. NO 707



Introduced by **SENATORS NANCY BINAY, GRACE POE, SHERWIN GATCHALIAN, RALPH RECTO AND JOEL VILLANUEVA**

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE COMMITTEE/S OF THE SENATE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE PERFORMANCE OF THE NATIONAL TASK FORCE TO END LOCAL COMMUNIST ARMED CONFLICT (NTF-ELCAC), WITH A VIEW TO DETERMINING WHETHER THE NTF-ELCAC IS EFFECTIVE IN FULFILLING ITS MANDATE AND EFFICIENT IN ITS BUDGET UTILIZATION

WHEREAS, Executive Order No. 70, series of 2018 created the National Task Force To End Local Communist Armed Conflict (“*NTF-ELCAC*”) to oversee the implementation of the Whole-of-Nation approach in addressing “the root causes of insurgencies, internal disturbances and tensions, and other armed conflicts and threats” through prioritization and harmonization of “delivery of basic services and social development packages by the government, facilitating societal inclusivity, and ensuring active participation of all sectors of the society in the pursuit of the country’s peace agenda.”¹ For 2021, a total of Php19.1 billion has been appropriated for the operations of the NTF-ELCAC;

WHEREAS, while the establishment of the NTF-ELCAC is, in principle, a good approach to end local communist armed conflict, there have been news reports and stories shared by various citizens on social media showing that members of the NTF-ELCAC have been publicly red-tagging individuals and entities, purportedly to harass and intimidate ordinary citizens;

¹ Office of the President, Institutionalizing the Whole-of-Nation Approach in Attaining Inclusive and Sustainable Peace, Creating a National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict, and Directing the Adoption of a National Peace Framework, Executive Order No. 70 [E.O. No. 70] (Dec. 4, 2018).

WHEREAS, on April 14, 2021, Ms. Ana Patricia Non, a young entrepreneur based in Quezon City initiated the “Community Pantry” at Maginhawa Street. The Community Pantry allows any person to take any of the food available in the “pantry” on the basis of their need, while those with more or are willing to help other citizens in need can just drop off their excess resources to the “pantry;”²

WHEREAS, Ms. Non’s simple act of kindness has inspired other well-minded citizens to establish over 350 community pantries all over the country,³ and which effort is now even being replicated abroad in Timor-Leste;⁴

WHEREAS, reports of baseless and malicious red-tagging, profiling, and police interference of community pantries led to a halt in operations in several community pantries, and instilled fear in the organizers and volunteers for their safety and lives, including those from the Maginhawa Community Pantry, which was forced to temporarily close on April 20, 2021;⁵

WHEREAS, in an interview, NTF-ELCAC Spokesperson Lt. Gen. Antonio Parlade, Jr. dropped “unverified” insinuations of communist ties of the community pantry organizer;⁶

WHEREAS, this is not the first time that the NTF-ELCAC came under fire for baselessly red-tagging individuals and entities for the latter’s supposed involvement in communist movements and insurgencies. In 2020, women’s rights advocates, Ms. Angel Locsin, Ms. Liza Soberano, and Ms. Catriona Gray were red-tagged, with Ms. Soberano left with a “warning” regarding supporting women’s rights groups, lest she die like activist Josephine “Jo” Lapira.⁷ At the start of 2021, 18 educational institutions were also irresponsibly branded as “recruitment havens for the New People’s Army.⁸ Meanwhile, several alumni of the University of the Philippines were also recklessly and maliciously implicated and named as members of the New Peoples’ Army;⁹

WHEREAS, as early as 2019, the Philippine National Police was already aware of the existence of anonymously-managed Facebook pages known for dubious posts and for red-tagging individuals and groups, such as *Tipong Makabayan* and *Enlightened PINOY*.¹⁰ Despite this knowledge and avowed commitments to investigate the same, however, no reports were made;

² *This woman set up a community pantry in Maginhawa to help those in need*, GMA NEWS ONLINE, April 14, 2021, available at <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/hashtag/content/783691/this-woman-set-up-a-community-pantry-in-maginhawa-to-help-those-in-need/story/> (last accessed: April 22, 2021).

³ Nikka G. Valenzuela, *Despite ‘red-tagging,’ community pantries rise to 350, says advocate*, INQUIRER, April 22, 2021, available at <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/hashtag/content/783691/this-woman-set-up-a-community-pantry-in-maginhawa-to-help-those-in-need/story/> (last accessed: April 22, 2021).

⁴ *Inspired by PH Initiative, Timor-Leste sets up first community pantry*, CNN PHILIPPINES, April 22, 2021, available at <https://cnnphilippines.com/news/2021/4/22/Timor-Leste-sets-up-first-community-pantry.html?fb> (last accessed: April 22, 2021).

⁵ *Maginhawa community pantry halts operations due to ‘red-tagging.’* CNN PHILIPPINES, April 20, 2021, available at <https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2021/4/20/Maginhawa-community-pantry-halts-operations-red-tagging.html> (last accessed: April 22, 2021).

⁶ Interview by One News with Lt. Gen. Antonio Parlade, Jr., Spokesperson of the NTF-ELCAC, April 21, 2021.

⁷ Bea Cupin, *ABS-CBN defends Angel Locsin, Liza Soberano against red-tagging*, RAPPLER, October 23, 2020, available at <https://www.rappler.com/entertainment/celebrities/abs-cbn-statement-defending-angel-locsin-liza-soberano-parlade-red-tagging> (last accessed: April 23, 2021).

⁸ *Top universities denounce red-tagging of schools*, RAPPLER, January 24, 2021, available at <https://www.rappler.com/nation/top-philippine-universities-denounce-red-tagging-schools> (last accessed: April 23, 2021).

⁹ *AFP apologizes for red-tagging UP alumni*, CNN PHILIPPINES, January 24, 2021, available at <https://cnnphilippines.com/news/2021/1/24/afp-to-apologize-for-red-tagging-up-alumni.html> (last accessed April 25, 2021).

¹⁰ Philippine National Police, 2019 ANNUAL FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REPORT, available at http://www.pnp.gov.ph/images/transparency_seal/2019/FOI/2019_ANNUAL_FOI_REPORT.pdf (last accessed April 25, 2021).

WHEREAS, rather than a *bona fide* effort to counter insurgencies in the country, the agency's actions have only served to deter the lawful exercise of the constitutionally-guaranteed right to freedom of expression of every Filipino, and cast doubt as to the true intent behind its operations;

WHEREAS, under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which the Philippines is a state party, the Philippines has an obligation to ensure the protection of the rights of all, including the rights to life, freedom of expression, and freedom of peaceful assembly;

WHEREAS, there is a need to draw the line between legitimate government counter-insurgency strategies against internal armed conflicts and threats on the one hand, and the silencing and crippling of innocent civilians with baseless and unsubstantiated claims, on the other. One aspect of drawing this line is to ensure that the government body in-charge of counter-insurgency movements has been effectively and efficiently performing its mandate by the adoption of programs, projects, and activities geared towards this mandate, and not for any other matter;

WHEREAS, with the limited resources of the government, especially at this time of the COVID-19 pandemic, and in view of the Constitutional principle that "[p]ublic office is a public trust,"¹¹ all government agencies are expected to use their budget judiciously, effectively, and efficiently pursuant to their mandate;

WHEREAS, there is a need to review the performance of the NTF-ELCAC in fulfilling its mandate vis-à-vis the need for judicious use of scarce government resources, and whether its Php19.1 billion appropriation for 2021 should be used instead to help address the needs of our citizens during this pandemic;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE PHILIPPINES, that the appropriate Committee/s of the Senate, conduct a review, in aid of legislation, of the performance of the NTF-ELCAC, including its programs, projects, activities, and budget utilization, with a view to determining whether NTF-ELCAC is effective in fulfilling its mandate and efficient in its budget utilization.

Adopted,

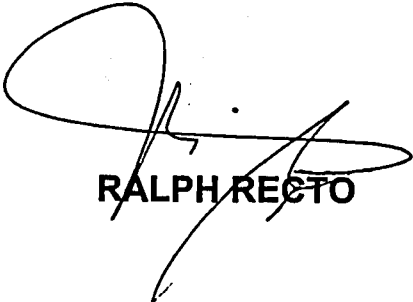

JOEL VILLANUEVA


SHERWIN GATCHALIAN


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¹¹ PHIL. CONST. Art. XI, Sec. 1.



RALPH RECTO