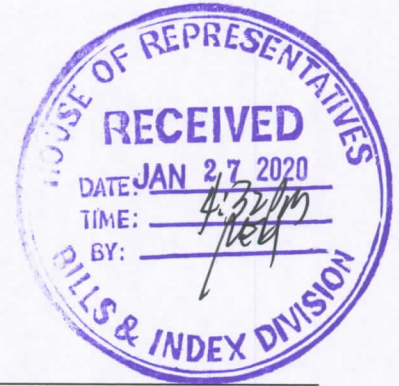


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION No. 666



Introduced by

**BAYAN MUNA Representatives CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE,
FERDINAND R. GAITE and EUFEMIA C. CULLAMAT,
ACT TEACHERS Party-List Representative FRANCE L. CASTRO,
GABRIELA Women's Party Representative ARLENE D. BROSAS
and KABATAAN Party-List Representative SARAH JANE I. ELAGO**

RESOLUTION

**STRONGLY URGING PRESIDENT RODRIGO R. DUTERTE TO IMMEDIATELY
RELEASE OF ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS, INCLUDING THE ELDERLY,
THOSE WITH ILLNESSES, THE WOMEN, AND THOSE IMPRISONED FOR
MORE THAN TEN (10) YEARS, FOR JUST AND HUMANITARIAN REASONS,
AND, THE RELEASE OF DETAINED CONSULTANTS OF THE NATIONAL
DEMOCRATIC FRONT OF THE PHILIPPINES (NDFP) IN COMPLIANCE WITH
THE JOINT AGREEMENT ON SAFETY AND IMMUNITY GUARANTEES
(JASIG) SIGNED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE
PHILIPPINES (GRP) AND THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FRONT OF THE
PHILIPPINES (NDFP) AS A GOODWILL MEASURE IN THE RESUMPTION OF
PEACE NEGOTIATIONS**

WHEREAS, on December 2019, President Rodrigo Duterte sent former government Chief Negotiator and Labor secretary Silvestre Bello to the Netherlands to speak with Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founder and NDFP Chief Political Consultant Jose Maria Sison for the possible resumption of the peace talks with the Communist rebels that the government terminated in 2017;

WHEREAS, thereafter, Prof. Jose Maria Sison said that there was a 90-percent chance that the peace talks will resume as a result of the back-channel talks held in Utrecht, Netherlands on December 6, 2019. In fact, the same was followed by declarations of simultaneous unilateral ceasefires by both parties between December 23, 2019 until January 7, 2020. However, the 10-percent unresolved issues, could make or break the prospects of restarting the stalled peace talks;

WHEREAS, among the contentious issues to be resolved is the venue of the talks and the freedom of political prisoners, especially the elderly and the sickly;

WHEREAS, it can be recalled that in 2016, in preparation for the resumption of the peace negotiations, 18 political prisoners were released as a goodwill measure and to usher a favorable environment and confidence building for the talks. As the talks progressed, 49 political prisoners were freed in total. Twenty (20) political prisoners were freed based on the merits of their cases, while nineteen (19) were in consideration of the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG), which was forged by the Government of the Republic of the Philippines

(GRP) and the NDFP in 1995;

WHEREAS, the Jasig essentially guarantees the immunity and safety of individuals involved in the peace talks. They are granted “free and unhindered passage” in the Philippines and in other countries in relation to their responsibilities in the peace talks. It provides for the immunity from “surveillance, harassment, search, arrest, detention, prosecution and interrogation, or any other similar punitive actions”;

WHEREAS, the Philippine Constitution also proscribes political imprisonment and political persecution. Under Article 3 Section 18 of the Bill of Rights it states: “No person shall be detained solely by reason of his political beliefs or aspirations”;

WHEREAS, human rights organization KARAPATAN Alliance for the Advancement of People’s rights has already documented 629 political prisoners as of December 2019, imprisoned in different jail facilities all over the country;

WHEREAS, of this number, 382, or more than 60-percent, were arrested within the three (3) years of the Duterte administration;

WHEREAS, of the total number of political prisoners, 92 are women, 104 are sickly, 48 are elderly and five (5) were minors when arrested. Sixty (60) have already languished in prison for more than 10 years;

WHEREAS, notably, 11 of these political prisoners are consultants of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, who are protected by the Jasig;

WHEREAS, among the jailed NDFP consultants are Vicente Ladlad, Adelberto Silva, Renante Gamara, Rey Claro Casambre, Frank Fernandez, Cleofe Lagtapon, Esterlita Suaybaguio, Rommel Salinas, and Leopoldo Calozas as well as NDFP panel staff Alex and Winona Birondo. They were arrested in succession after peace negotiations were unilaterally canceled by the government in November 2017;

WHEREAS, all had been similarly charged with illegal possession of firearms, ammunition, and explosives;

WHEREAS, consultant Rafael Baylosis was the first to be arrested in January 2018 but was released by the Quezon City Regional Trial Court a year later due to lack of evidence. Meanwhile, two (2) consultants have languished in jail before the peace talks commenced in August 2016: Eduardo Sarmiento and Ferdinand Castillo, who were arrested in 2009 and 2017, consecutively;

WHEREAS, it should also be noted that some NDFP consultants were forcibly disappeared. NDFP consultant Lora T. Manipis has been reported missing since February 24, 2018. Manipis joined other missing NDFP consultants believed abducted by suspected state security forces, such as Leo Velasco, Rogelio Calubad, Prudencio Calubid, NDFP staff members Philip Limjoco, Leopoldo Ancheta, and Federico Intise;

WHEREAS, some NDFP consultants were also victims of extrajudicial killings (EJK). The youngest NDFP consultant Randy Felix P. Malayao was assassinated in Aritao, Nueva Vizcaya by still unidentified gunmen in January 2019, while, Sotero Llamas was killed in Tabaco, Albay in May 2006;

1 **WHEREAS**, the release of political prisoners, particularly the elderly, sickly, and those who have
2 been in prison for more than 10 (10) years, will augur well in the prospect of the resumption of
3 the peace negotiations as an act of goodwill and confidence building;

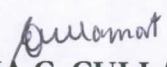
4 **WHEREAS**, as peacemakers, legislators should support the resumption of peace negotiations
5 with rebel groups, in the interest of the Filipino people who aspire for a peaceful, united, and just
6 society;

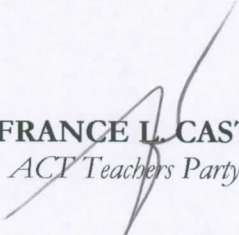
7 **NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT**, the House of Representatives adopt this
8 resolution, strongly urging President Rodrigo R. Duterte to immediately release of all political
9 prisoners, including the elderly, those with illnesses, the women, and those imprisoned for more
10 than ten (10) years, for just and humanitarian reasons, and the release of detained consultants of
11 the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) in compliance with the Joint
12 Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (Jasig) signed by the Government of the
13 Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the NDFP and as a goodwill measure for the resumption
14 of the peace negotiations.

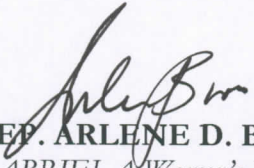
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23 **REP. CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE**
24 *Bayan Muna Partylist*

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30 **REP. FERDINAND R. GAITE**
31 *Bayan Muna Partylist*

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37 **REP. EUFEMIA C. CULLAMAT**
38 *Bayan Muna Partylist*

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45 **REP. FRANCE L. CASTRO**
46 *ACT Teachers Partylist*

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52 **REP. ARLENE D. BROSAS**
53 *GABRIELA Women's Party*

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REP. SARAH JANE I. ELAGO
Kabataan Partylist