

Republic of the Philippines  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
Quezon City

**EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS**  
First Regular Session  
**HOUSE RESOLUTION No. 488**



Introduced by  
**BAYAN MUNA Party-List 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**  
**DIRECTING THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS TO CONDUCT**  
**AN INVESTIGATION, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE MASS ARREST OF**  
**LEADERS OF PROGRESSIVE ORGANIZATIONS AND ACTIVISTS IN THE**  
**NEGROS ISLAND BY COMBINED ELEMENTS OF THE POLICE AND**  
**MILITARY, AS WELL THE REPORTED PLANTING OF FIREARMS,**  
**EXPLOSIVES AND OTHER EVIDENCE**

**WHEREAS**, on October 31, 2019, a composite raiding team consisting of the Army's 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division, Joint Task Force-Negros and Negros Occidental Police Provincial Office, led by Criminal Investigation and Detection Group 6 (CIDG-6), conducted simultaneous raids on the offices of Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU), National Federation of Sugar Workers, the regional offices of Bayan Muna and Gabriela, and, two (2) private residences in Bacolod City and Escalante City. At least fifty-seven individuals, including nine (9) mass leaders and 13 minors, were arrested;

**WHEREAS**, the police and the military later claimed to have recovered 32 assorted firearms, particularly caliber .45 pistol, caliber 9 mm pistol, hand grenades, sub-machine guns, machine guns, bladed weapons and several ammunitions from the raided offices and residents.<sup>1</sup> The arrested activists, however, vehemently claim that the weapons were planted by the raiding teams to justify their mass arrest. In fact, among the seized materials by the police and military are KMU flags, megaphones and microphones;

**WHEREAS**, the raiding teams justified their Gestapo-like action in Bacolod City by supposedly presenting four (4) search warrants that, curiously, were all issued by Quezon City Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 89 Executive Judge Cecilyn Burgos;

**WHEREAS**, the people arrested were then detained in the following:

Place of detention: **Women and Children Protection Desk (WCPD)**

Female Minors (6)

1. Jona Mae Dañoso Bariga, 15, Anakbayan;
2. EB Palmares, 17, Anakbayan;
3. Jhelyn Sungkip Rueles, 14, Teatro Obrero;

<sup>1</sup> <https://news.mb.com.ph/2019/11/02/andanan-decries-claim-evidence-in-recent-op-vs-npa-planted/>

4. Angel Alma Villamonte;
5. Eva May Pinili, Teatro Obrero;
6. Michelle Moñtano;

Youth (not minors) (2)

7. Cheryl Ann Catalogo, 24, Teatro Obrero;
8. Karina May dela Cerna, 19, NNARA Youth;

Place of detention: **Social Development Center (SDC)**, Bacolod City Police Office (BCPO)

Male Minors (7)

9. Leojhen Sungkio Rueles, 15, Teatro Obrero;
10. Robert Belleza Azumbra, 12;
11. Elvin Velasco, 15, Teatro Obrero;
12. John Carl Aligares;
13. Aljhon Antes;
14. Joebert Sedenio, 13, Teatro Obrero;
15. Noli Balbeso;

Place of detention: **Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG)** located at the Negros Oriental Provincial Police Office

Mass leaders (9)

16. Romulo Bito-on, Makabayan Coordinator, SELDA;
17. Mermalyn Bito-on, 53, wife of Romulo;
18. Albert dela Cerna;
19. John Milton Lozande, NFSW Secretary General;
20. Danilo Nacario Tabura, NFSW;
21. Noli Lazera Rosales, KMU;
22. Mary Ann Krueger, 36, Altermidya;
23. Proceso Quiatchon, Karapatan;
24. Roberto Dorio Lachica;

Place of detention: **Chapel of Negros Occidental Provincial Police Office**

Male youth (10)

25. Jeffherd Alipo-on, 23, Anakbayan;
26. Ashley Mark Antes, 19, Anakbayan;
27. Mark Anthony Olayra, 19;
28. Marcelo Apinan Escaner, 29, NNARA Youth;
29. Ernie Escultor, 21, Anakbayan;
30. Eddie T. Ebon, 21, Teatro Kaling;
31. Mario Tambiga, 22, Teatro Obrero Chairman;
32. Christian Diaz, 18;
33. Joe del Mar A. Tano;
34. Junelle Jusal Miraflor, 31, NNARA Youth;
- 35-55. Ceres Workers (21);
- Others:
- 56-57. 2 arrested in Escalante City

**WHEREAS**, the BCPO's main gate was allegedly padlocked and guarded by heavily armed PNP personnel, who then refused to allow the parents/relatives or the lawyer entry into the compound;



1 **WHEREAS**, the PNP officers guarding the gate stated that they had orders, particularly, from  
2 PNP Officer Arlene Torrendon, not to allow anyone to visit the minors under detention at the  
3 BCPO – WCPD. Despite repeated attempts, the PNP personnel did not grant the lawyer or the  
4 parents/relatives entry, nor were they permitted to speak to the commanding officer or a high-  
5 ranking PNP officer;

6  
7 **WHEREAS**, only a single social worker was allowed entry into the SDC. According to her, the  
8 persons in charge would only allow the minors to come to the gate and see their parents/ relatives,  
9 and receive the food/items brought for them;

10  
11 **WHEREAS**, except for Danny Tabura, none of the other detainees were read their Miranda rights  
12 when they were arrested;

13  
14 **WHEREAS**, detainees held inside the CIDG office underwent interrogation, without the  
15 assistance of a lawyer of their own choice, by a group of individuals (five males and one female,  
16 all in civilian attire) suspected to be army intelligence personnel. All detainees belonging to cultural  
17 group also underwent uncounseled interrogation. The detainees were asked, among other things,  
18 for:

- 19  
20
- 21 • Background information
  - 22 • History and details of their “recruitment” into their respective organizations, including
  - 23 the name(s) of the person(s) who recruited them.
  - 24 • Participation in rallies
  - 25 • “Pagtu-on” or education taken
  - 26 • Whether they were members of the NPA

27 **WHEREAS**, some detainees were allegedly subjected to threats, acts of intimidation, and physical  
28 and emotional maltreatment. Detainees belonging to the cultural group were:

- 29
- 30 • Fed only bread since their arrest on Oct. 31, 2019; some of the detainees describe being
  - 31 forced to eat. They received their first proper meal only in the evening of Nov. 1, 2019;
  - 32 • Made to watch a video/movie about NPA surrenderees. It was held at the
  - 33 plaza/Canlaon Hall during the first evening (Oct 31, 2019) before they were
  - 34 transferred to the NOPPO Chapel the next day;
  - 35 • Awoken, forced to get up, and photographed at around 2 AM of Nov. 1, 2019;
  - 36 • Interviewed individually; interrogators tried to force the detainees to admit being
  - 37 members of the NPA. Threats were employed in some instances;
  - 38 • Forced to dance in front of the PNP personnel;

39  
40 **WHEREAS**, as of the end of the jail visit (3:00 PM, Nov. 2, 2019), none of the detainees had  
41 been subjected to inquest proceedings;

42  
43 **WHEREAS**, the Negros 57, as they are now collectively known, questioned the search warrant  
44 issued by the Quezon City Judge Villavert, which includes “John Does” and “Jane Does” as  
45 respondents;

46  
47 **WHEREAS**, their lawyers, relatives and suport groups also raised issues on the fact that National  
48 Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) Acting Director Brig. Gen. Debold Sinas held a meeting  
49 with QRTC Executive Judge Villavert in the House of Justice, Diliman, Quezon City on October

30, a day before the crackdown and mass arrests. There is a growing apprehension now that the court issued warrants and processes are now being “weaponized” to stifle the rights of our people;

**WHEREAS**, activist leader John Milton Lozande, one of those arrested, said the composite team held them for around an hour, after which he was called to a house in the compound and showed “an obviously planted” gun supposedly found in his bag;<sup>2</sup>

**WHEREAS**, Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) chairperson Danilo Ramos pointed out to the video posted by community journalist Anne Krueger before her arrest as a proof that the firearms and grenades came from the composite police and military raiding team;

**WHEREAS**, Communications Secretary Martin Andanar, in his statement, claims that the individuals arrested were “members of the communist terrorist group the New People’s Army (NPA) in Bacolod.” However, in the same statement, he contradicted himself saying that the individuals were merely “affiliated with the NPA;”

**WHEREAS**, Andanar’s and the raiding teams’ claims against the Negros 57 are clearly preposterous and baseless considering that the raided offices are publicly known offices of the organizations in Bacolod and Escalante cities, where the media and even the members of the public openly come and go to conduct interviews or consult or seek assistance related to various issues. In fact, the 21 workers from the Ceres Bus company who were also arrested were at the KMU office that day for a consultation. Nine (9) of those arrested, including Bayan Muna Regional Coordinator Romulo Bitoon, are also widely-known progressive leaders in the island, and has led protests against policies and laws detrimental to the rights of poor peasants and workers in the island. The claim that these persons were conducting military training with high-powered rifles not far from the main thoroughfares of the city is preposterous;

**WHEREAS**, on Nov. 2, 2019, the Communist Party of the Philippines denied that the arrested activists are members of NPA;<sup>3</sup>

**WHEREAS**, the recent simultaneous raids are clearly made to intimidate and to harass activists, the leaders and members of progressive organizations, who are consistent in their advocacies and defense for the interests and rights of our people. The planting of explosives and other evidence was premeditated so that the Negros 57 will face non-bailable offenses that will keep them in jail while the trumped-up cases are being tried in court. The crackdown is designed to deliver a chilling effect on critics of the Duterte administration, particularly in its failed but bloody anti-drug campaign, the worsening cases of human rights violations, graft and corruption, failed economic programs, among others;

**WHEREAS**, the alarming increase in the cases of human rights abuses, especially the killings of human rights workers, activists and farmers happen in the target areas covered by the government issued Memorandum Order No. 32, which mandates the increase deployment of state forces in the said regions. In all regions and provinces included in MO 32, state forces or their agents are blamed for the killings and other human rights abuses. MO 32’s issuance followed that of Executive Order No. 70, issued by President Duterte, which among others, mandate the creation of a national task force to end the communist armed conflict. It is the same task force that apparently directs the conduct of the Negros crackdown and mass arrests of the Negros 57;

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.panaynews.net/full-blown-crack-down-55-activists-arrested-in-bacolod-raids/>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.cnnphilippines.com/regional/2019/11/2/CPP-denies-arrested-activists-NPA-members.html?fbclid=IwAR0YRK8kfRFIwqycDZqlat5Qj7wSzYjOjeHBfpl8WaD2\\_2c9c\\_50QElt7io#.Xb4CraZgorg.facebook](https://www.cnnphilippines.com/regional/2019/11/2/CPP-denies-arrested-activists-NPA-members.html?fbclid=IwAR0YRK8kfRFIwqycDZqlat5Qj7wSzYjOjeHBfpl8WaD2_2c9c_50QElt7io#.Xb4CraZgorg.facebook)



1  
2 **WHEREAS**, MO 32 and EO 70 fully unveiled itself as a tool for tyrannical suppression campaign  
3 against progressive, democratic organizations and individuals. The real targets of these twin  
4 government edicts are the legal, unarmed members of progressive organizations and activists who  
5 are consistently fighting for the interests of the people and now considered "enemies of the state"  
6 as well by the Duterte administration. The "sporadic acts of violence" described in the issuance  
7 more clearly pertains to state-backed dubious operations;  
8

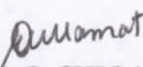
9 **WHEREAS**, it is imperative for members of Congress, as representatives of our people, to look  
10 into the plight of our people and check on excesses or violations committed against their rights.  
11 Laws and rules should be made to serve the best interest of our people and should not be  
12 weaponized to oppress them and suppress their rights;  
13


14 **NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the House of Representatives, through the  
15 Committee on Human Rights, to conduct an investigation, in aid of legislation, on the mass arrests  
16 of leaders of progressive organizations and activists in the Negros Island by combined elements  
17 of the police and the military and the reported planting of firearms, explosives and other dubious  
18 evidence.  
19

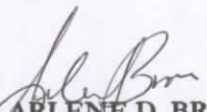
20  
21 *Approved,*  
22

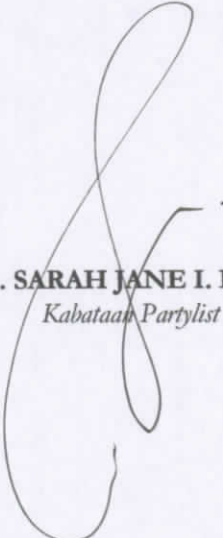
23  
24   
25 **REP. CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE**  
26 *Bayan Muna Partylist*

27  
28   
29  
30 **REP. FERDINAND R. GAITE**  
31 *Bayan Muna Partylist*

32  
33   
34 **REP. EUFEMIA C. CULLAMAT**  
35 *Bayan Muna Partylist*

36  
37   
38 **REP. FRANCE L. CASTRO**  
39 *ACT Teachers Partylist*

40  
41   
42 **REP. ARLENE D. BROSAS**  
43 *CABRIELA Women's Party*

44  
45  
46   
47 **REP. SARAH JANE I. ELAGO**  
*Kabataan Partylist*