

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION No. 16



Introduced by

BAYAN MUNA Party-List Representatives EUFEMIA C. CULLAMAT, CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE and FERDINAND R. GAITE, 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 URGING THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, THROUGH THE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS, TO CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON MEMORANDUM ORDER 32 AND ITS AGGRAVATING EFFECT ON THE GRAVE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN EASTERN VISAYAS, NEGROS ISLAND AND BICOL REGION

WHEREAS, on November 22, 2018, Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, by Order of President Rodrigo R. Duterte, signed Memorandum Order (MO) Number 32, instructing the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police to supposedly end the "sporadic acts of violence" in the provinces of Negros Occidental, Negros Oriental, Samar island and the Bicol region;

WHEREAS, MO 32 takes off at President Duterte's earlier issuance, Proclamation No. 55 s.2016, which declared a state of national emergency on account of the Davao City bombings on September 2, 2016;

WHEREAS, MO 32, instructed the Department of National Defense and the Department of the Interior and Local Government to "coordinate the immediate deployment of additional forces of the AFP and PNP to "suppress lawless violence and acts of terror" in those areas;

WHEREAS, the issuance of the memo comes after the killing of nine (9) sugarcane farmers in Sagay, Negros Occidental in October 20, 2018. The fatalities, who included four (4) women and two (2) minors, belonged to the National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW). Human rights organization KARAPATAN-Negros Island allege that state agents are behind the massacre of

farmers, in the fashion of human rights abuses committed against organized movements in the country;

WHEREAS, the Sagay massacre victims' lawyer and founding member of the National Union of People's Lawyers, Atty. Benjamin Ramos, subsequently was murdered by motorcycle-riding assassins on November 6, 2018; he sustained three (3) fatal gunshot wounds;

WHEREAS, the barbarous attack in Sagay was not suppressed by the deployment of state agents, as in the directive of Memo 32. On the contrary, it was followed by a spate of killings and other human rights violations committed by suspected members of state security forces and their proxies against personalities and members of the progressive movement in Negros;

WHEREAS, on March 30, fourteen (14) farmers were killed in one night, drug-war Tokhang-style, in Canlaon City, Manjuyod and Sta. Catalina towns in Negros Occidental in a coordinated police operations dubbed as Oplan Sauron. A fact-finding mission revealed that the victims were summarily executed.¹ Twelve (12) more farmers were arrested the same night;

WHEREAS, on April 22, 2019, human rights advocate and incumbent Escalante City Councilor Bernardino "Toto" Patigas, a Bayan Muna leader was shot dead while coming from a campaign sortie. He was noted by human rights organization KARAPATAN Alliance for Human Rights as the "48th human rights worker killed in the course of human rights advocacy";

WHEREAS, Defend Negros Network notes that there had been 66 killings of human rights workers and farmers in the island in the Duterte administration. The Network attributed the spike in the violations after the issuance of MO 32, a brutal component of the government's counterinsurgency policy Oplan Kapanatagan²;

WHEREAS, in Eastern Visayas, the exacerbation of human rights abuse was also seen after the enactment of the MO 32, particularly with the arrival of additional troops in Samar. However, although according to human rights group *Katungod Sinirangan Bisayas*, the human rights situation in Eastern Visayas is already worst, especially under the yoke of the Army's 8th Infantry Division. *Katungod Sinirangan Bisayas* has recorded over fifty-one (51) killings under the administration's Oplan Tokhang and seven (7) peasants killed under the government's counter-insurgency program dubbed as Oplan Kapayapaan;

WHEREAS, progressive organizations all over the region, meanwhile, have also experienced sustained surveillance, threat and harassment from the military, the police and government intelligence agents. These include the heightened red-tagging and vilification of leaders of Bayan Eastern Visayas, Alliance of Concerned Teachers Eastern Visayas, Katungod Sinirangan Bisayas, SAGUPA Eastern Visayas, Kadamay-Metro Tacloban, Anakbayan Eastern Visayas and League of Filipino Students Metro Tacloban, Kilusang Mayo Uno Eastern Visayas and People Surge Philippines. Online social media articles, streamers and other propaganda materials are also being

¹ <https://www.bulatlat.com/2019/04/08/justicefornegros14-probe-reveals-state-security-forces-committed-murder-theft-other-abuses/>

² <https://www.bulatlat.com/2019/06/23/66-killed-under-duterte-advocates-call-for-defense-of-human-rights-in-negros/>

posted or distributed alleging their connection to the New People's Army and the Communist Party of the Philippines, both underground organizations targeted by the government's anti-insurgency campaigns;

WHEREAS, MO 32 also mandates the Department of National Defense, Department of Interior and Local Government and the Department of Justice to "coordinate with the intelligence community in order to enhance local and transnational intelligence operations" aimed at doubling efforts to surveil targeted individuals, groups and places for the purpose of crushing lawless violence in the region;

WHEREAS, the increase in surveillance and other intelligence operations also inevitably threaten the security of targeted individuals and groups that the the current administration wrongfully considers as "terrorists";

WHEREAS, late the vicious tentacles of MO 32 have already reached the Bicol region mid-2019, marked by the killing of two (2) human rights defenders on June 15, 2019 in Barangay Cabid-an, Sorsogon on June 15, 2019. Bicol is third on the list of MO 32's target spots;

WHEREAS, Karapatan said the killings of their two (2) staff members, senior high school student Ryan Hubilla, 22, and Nelly Bagasala, 69, came after they experienced periodic surveillance supposedly carried out by the military and the police. The victims were tailed by a gray pickup vehicle and a black motorcycle with no license plates last April 21 at 10 pm after the group escorted lawyer Bart Rayco of the National Union of Peoples' Lawyers for a visit with political prisoners at the Philippine National Police's outpost in Barangay Cabid-an;

WHEREAS, later, activist Neptali Morada, a former Bayan Muna Regional Coordinator, was gunned down at around 7:30 am on Monday, June 17, in Barangay San Isidro, Naga City, Camarines Sur;

WHEREAS, in Masbate, meanwhile Arnie Espenilla, was killed in Brgy Lahong, San Fernando in June 9, 2019. By June 10, Zando Alcovendas in Brgy. Buenavista, was shot dead. A few days later on June 14, Pizo Cabahug was also slain in the same barangay. They were all members of human rights organization Masbate People's Organization;

WHEREAS, these cases of human rights abuses, particularly the killings of human rights workers and farmers in the target areas of MO 32, clearly show that the clear and present danger to the public does not come from non-state actors. In all regions and provinces included in the memo, suspected state agents are blamed for the killings and human rights abuse;

WHEREAS, MO 32 has manifested itself as another measure for tyrannical repression of progressive, democratic organizations and individuals. The "sporadic acts of violence" described in the issuance more clearly pertains to state-backed operations;

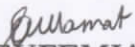
WHEREAS, it is the duty and responsibility of the House of Representatives to protect the human rights of the people. Issuances that fall contrary to human rights must be halted, and perpetrators

brought to justice. The respect for human rights and democratic rights of the people must be held in the highest esteem;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the House of Representatives, through its Committee on Human Rights, to conduct an investigation, in aid of legislation, on Memorandum Order 32 and its aggravating effect on the grave human rights situation in Eastern Visayas, Negros Island, and Bicol Region.

Adopted,


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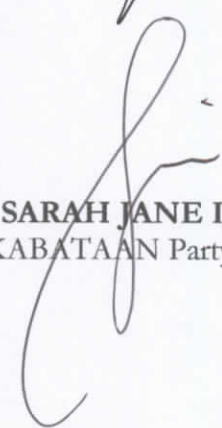

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