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Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION No. 459



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Introduced by
BAYAN MUNA Representatives CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE,
FERDINAND R. GAITE and EUFEMIA C. CULLAMAT

RESOLUTION
DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS TO CONDUCT AN IMMEDIATE JOINT INVESTIGATION AND PHYSICAL INSPECTION, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE CONDITION OF POLITICAL PRISONERS AND OTHER PRISONERS IN THE NEW BILIBID PRISON

WHEREAS, the Bureau of Corrections is mandated by law to accomplish its twin objectives of “effective rehabilitation and safekeeping of national prisoners,” which envision a “corrections system that promotes a safer community, adheres to international standards and represents exemplary public service,” and its functions include “safekeep(ing) of prisoners convicted by courts three years and one day and above to serve sentence in prison” and “provid(ing) inmates (their) basic needs as human beings,” among others;¹

WHEREAS, the United Nations (UN) Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners approved in 1957 prescribe the following:²

1. Accommodation: Cells for individuals should not be used to accommodate two or more persons overnight; dormitory facilities are to be supervised at night. Cells and prison dormitories should provide adequate space, ventilation, lighting and sanitary facilities and are to be kept clean at all times;
2. Food: “Wholesome, well-prepared food is to be provided prisoners at usual hours,” and “drinking water shall be available whenever needed”; and
3. Medical Services: “Prisoners requiring specialized treatment are to be transferred to a civil hospital or appropriate facility”;

¹ <http://www.bucor.gov.ph/about.html>

² https://www.unodc.org/pdf/criminal_justice/UN_Standard_Minimum_Rules_for_the_Treatment_of_Prisoners.pdf

1 **WHEREAS**, the New Bilibid Prison (NBP) maximum security compound has been on alleged
2 lockdown since October 9, 2019, resulting, according to the Samahan ng mga Pamilya na Nasa
3 Death Row, in suspended visitation rights, cut-off of the delivery of clean water and destruction
4 of prisoners' sleeping quarters;³

5
6 **WHEREAS**, according to KAPATID, a human rights group comprising of families and
7 supporters of political prisoners, the blanket ban on all visitors includes families of prisoners as
8 well as religious volunteer officers (RVO) like church-based prison ministries and Caritas, which
9 *deprives the sick and elderly prisoners of essential medical needs such as maintenance medicines*
10 brought in by their relatives for treatment of chronic illnesses;

11
12 **WHEREAS**, Building 11, which was constructed with voluntary donations including from
13 Bayan Muna to provide shelter for political prisoners who now number 50, including 80-year old
14 Gerardo Dela Peña and the very sick, is reportedly among those affected by clearing operations;

15
16 **WHEREAS**, there is an alleged collection of fees for the access of water and electricity in the
17 NBP;

18
19 **WHEREAS**, there are 27,165 inmates at the maximum security compound, which can only
20 accommodate 6,435 prisoners, raising the congestion rate at 322%;

21
22 **WHEREAS**, as of October 15, 2019, seven prisoners have died in just a span of five days due to
23 illness aggravated by the alleged lack of medical attention. Joselito Roxas died in the prison
24 hospital on October 9 when the BuCor started the demolition of *kubols* (cubicles) at the
25 maximum security compound. Bobby Cosinero and Alfredo Tominez died the next day. On
26 October 12, three inmates died: Ricardo Santos, 70; Nicomedes Cañon, 81; and Fernando
27 Raynon; followed by Nilo Rawa Bacay, 51, on Oct. 13;⁴

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29 **WHEREAS**, according to BuCor Spokesperson Alberto Tapiru, there are more sick inmates
30 confined in the prison hospital;

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32 **WHEREAS**, according to NBP hospital director Ernesto Tamayo during a Senate hearing on
33 Oct. 3, 2019, 20% of the inmates in the maximum security compound die every year mostly due
34 to the spread of contagious diseases, primarily tuberculosis, in the overcrowded jail cells;

35
36 **WHEREAS**, the newly appointed BuCor Director General Gerald Bantag is known for his
37 notorious reputation as a warden. He faces ten counts of murder for a deadly grenade explosion
38 in August 2016, which killed ten inmates, and the Parañaque city court had even issued an arrest
39 warrant against Bantag;⁵

40
41 **WHEREAS**, there is a clear violation of the mandate of the Bureau of Corrections and the UN
42 Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners if current conditions at the NBP are
43 allowed to persist unchecked and degenerate further into a full-blown humanitarian crisis;

44
45 **NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the House of Representatives, through its
46 Committee on Justice and Human Rights, conduct an immediate joint investigation and physical

³ <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/10/22/19/no-clean-water-no-beds-8-bilibid-inmates-dead-due-to-dehydration-group>

⁴ <https://www.philstar.com/nation/2019/10/15/1960191/7-inmates-die-bilibid>

⁵ <https://www.rappler.com/nation/240338-gerald-bantag-named-bureau-corrections-director-general>

1 inspection, in aid of legislation, on the condition of political prisoners and other prisoners in the
2 New Bilibid Prison.

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4 *Approved,*

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11 **REP. CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE**
12 *Bayan Muna Partylist*

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18 **REP. FERDINAND R. GAITE**
19 *Bayan Muna Partylist*


REP. EUFEMIA C. CULLAMAT
Bayan Muna Partylist