Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION No. 1145

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

RESOLUTION
DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS TO CONDUCT AN
INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE EXTRJUDICIAL KILLING OF
HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST ZARA ALVAREZ IN BRGY. MANDALAGAN,
BACOLOD CITY

WHEREAS, on 17 August 2020 at around 6:45 PM, human rights activist and former political
detainee Zara Alvarez was shot dead by unknown gunmen in Eroreco Subdivision, Brgy.
Mandalagan, Bacolod City. Alvarez was as a paralegal for Karapatan – Negros, helping farmers
and rights advocates facing various rights violations and fabricated charges. She also served as
research and advocacy officer of the Negros Island Health Integrated Program (NIHIP). She was
also a member of the Board of Trustees of the Council for Health and Development;

WHEREAS, in 2004, Alvarez was the target of a defamatory campaign by the military tagging
her as a communist terrorist in public events and on the radio. In addition to this, she received
threatening text messages and surveillance. In 2008, Alvarez was declared as persona non grata in
Guinhiangan City, Negros Oriental, together with her colleagues Fred Caña and Felipe Levy Gelle
who were leaders of progressive organizations;

WHEREAS, on October 30, 2012, Alvarez was illegally arrested on fabricated charges in Cadiz
City, Negros Island. Alvarez only learned of the fabricated charges against her at the time of her
arrest. After 20 months in prison, she was released on bail in July 2014. Just this year, on 4
March 2020, Alvarez, along with eight others accused of the fabricated charge, was acquitted of
the trumped-up charge for lack of evidence;

WHEREAS, in 2018, Alvarez was included in posters tagging her and other activists as
communist terrorists which were circulated in Bacolod City. Also included in the poster was
human rights lawyer Benjamin Ramos who was also shot dead by unknown gunmen in 2018;

WHEREAS, in 2018, Alvarez was among those named in a petition filed by the Department of
Justice tagging 649 individuals as “terrorists” and seeking to declare the Communist Party of the
Philippines (CPP) - New People’s Army (NPA) as a terrorist organization. She and more than
600 individuals were eventually removed from the list in an amended petition submitted to the
Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 19. The DOJ has since admitted that it did not verify the list
and merely relied on government intelligence agencies. The petition has been denounced by
human rights groups as a virtual hit-list. Just a week before the killing of Alvarez, another
individual tagged in the petition, peace consultant and peasant leader Randall Echanis was killed
in his home by still unknown assailants;

WHEREAS, on 20 July 2019, the office of human rights group Karapatan, for whom Alvarez
was working as a paralegal, received an anonymous call. The caller told the Karapatan staff
member who answered the call that Zara Alvarez was the next target and that they would get rid
of all members of the National Union of People’s Lawyers. The call was made after a spate of
killings in Negros Island starting November 2018 under the implementation of Memorandum
Order 32. The memorandum ordered the deployment of additional police and military forces in
the Bicol, Samar, and Negros Island. More than 90 killings of farmers, activists, and other
individuals critical of the administration have since been recorded since the implementation of
the memorandum;

WHEREAS, the killing of Zara Alvarez and other political activists comes after multiple threats
and pronouncements by President Duterte himself against human rights defenders and critics,
declaring a bounty for the killing of alleged “communist rebels” and threatening to shoot rights
activists who are “obstructing justice” amid the War on Drugs. In 2018, Duterte made
pronouncements of creating a death squad against “communists”;

WHEREAS, in June 2020, the United Nations report on killings in the Philippines suggested that
the President’s public comments “may have incited violence, and may have had the effect of
encouraging, backing or even ordering human rights violations with impunity”;

WHEREAS, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, killings of activists and critics continue to intensify,
even as varying levels of community quarantine and curfews are in place. Despite an increased
number of checkpoints and law enforcement authorities deployed all over the country to enforce
quarantine measures, motorcycle-riding gunmen out to kill activists seemingly continue to roam
freely;

WHEREAS, Zara Alvarez is the 13th human rights worker of Karapatan killed under the Duterte
administration. Her killing is a threat to all human rights workers merely working to assist and help
defend farmers, activists, and rights advocates despite threats to their person and even under
increasing repression and limitations under the COVID-19 pandemic;

WHEREAS, it is imperative for members of Congress, as representatives of our people, to defend
the rights of our people and check on excesses and violations committed against them. Laws and
rules should serve the interest of our people and abuses against it should be held to account.
Congress is duty-bound to conduct investigations to be able to uphold justice and protect the
people against abuses especially during extraordinary times such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, that the
Committee on Human Rights conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the killing of human
rights activist Zara Alvarez in Brgy. Mandalagan, Bacolod City.
Adopted,

REP. ECOPHEIA C. CULLAMAT
Bayan Muna Partylist

REP. CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE
Bayan Muna Partylist

REP. ARLENE D. BROSAS
Gabriela Women’s Party

REP. FRANCIS L. CASTRO
ACT Teachers Partylist

REP. SARAH JANE I. ELAGO
Kabdiak Partylist