Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION No. 1269

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

RESOLUTION
DIRECTING THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO CONDUCT AN
INVESTIGATION, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA
PLATFORMS BY THE ARMED FORCES OF THE PHILIPPINES AND THE
PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE FOR RED-TAGGING AND DEMONIZING
PROGRESSIVE ORGANIZATIONS AS REPORTED BY FACEBOOK, AND ITS
POSSIBLE USE OF PUBLIC FUNDS TO FINANCE THESE OPERATIONS

WHEREAS, in an online press conference on September 22, Nathaniel Gleicher, head of security
policy of giant social media website Facebook, said that the platform has shut down over 100 fake
accounts traced to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and Philippine National Police
(PNP) for engaging in what it calls “coordinated inauthentic behavior” or CIB;

WHEREAS, part of the statement\(^1\) released by Facebook said:

“We [also] removed 57 Facebook accounts, 31 Pages and 20 Instagram accounts for
violating our policy against foreign or government interference which is coordinated
inauthentic behavior on behalf of a foreign or government entity. This network originated
in the Philippines and focused on domestic audiences.

“This network consisted of several clusters of connected activity that relied on fake
accounts to evade enforcement, post content, comment and manage Pages. This operation
appeared to have accelerated between 2019 and 2020. They posted in Filipino and English
about local news and events including domestic politics, military activities against
terrorism, pending anti-terrorism bill, criticism of communism, youth activists and
opposition, the Communist Party of the Philippines and its military wing the New People’s
Army, and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines… our investigation found
links to Philippine military and Philippine police.”

WHEREAS, a coordinated inauthentic behavior or CIB is described by Facebook as “coordinated
efforts to manipulate public debate for a strategic goal where fake accounts are central to the

operation.\textsuperscript{2};

\textbf{WHEREAS,} accounts included in the takedown include the following:

- Hands Off Our Children
- Solid Sarah Z. Duterte 2022
- South China Sea Outpost
- Talahib
- Ang Aking Bayan
- Bantayog
- League of Democratic
- Jona zizon
- Hayagan NA
- Enlightened Youth
- Silip Pinoy
- Kalinaw News
- Buhay Sundalo
- ITO KAMI.
- SOCIAL MEDIA OPERATION TRAINING CL-02-18
- Pinoy Ako
- Masang Pinoy\textsuperscript{3}

These sites contain false information and red-tagging of opposition groups and personalities;

\textbf{WHEREAS,} for years, activists and progressive groups, including the partylist organizations under the MAKABAYAN Coalition in Congress, have been subjected to widespread and coordinated false or fake news, threats or incitement of violence, and red or terrorist-tagging;

\textbf{WHEREAS,} even church groups and leaders are not also spared from red-tagging. Notably, in November 2019, Manila Auxiliary Bishop Broderick Pabillo has deplored the inclusion of at least 50 organizations, including several church groups, in the government's list of alleged "communist front organizations\textsuperscript{4}," Aid organizations Caritas Australia, Caritas Austria, Caritas Belgium, Caritas Switzerland, the Diocesan Social Action Center of Kalibo, the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, Save the Children Foundation, Bread for the World, Oxfam International, Swedish Red Cross and Mercy Relief also were included in the list, according to a presentation made by security agencies at the House of Representatives last year\textsuperscript{5};

\textbf{WHEREAS,} opposition officials including detained Senator Leila De Lima and Vice President Leni Robredo are also subject to these massive, coordinated online attacks;

\textbf{WHEREAS,} Some of the pages posting these are official PNP or AFP social media accounts of military or government officials, such as Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO) Undersecretary Lorraine Badoy or chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Southern Luzon Command (Solcom) Major General Antonio Parlade Jr. Notably, Badoy and Parlade respectively, are ranking officials of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC), which, since 2017 has been in the forefront of the rabid vilification

campaign against progressive organizations and their members;

WHEREAS, elections and information scholars abroad described the troll farms in the Philippines as an epidemic. Katie Harbath, Facebook public policy director for global elections, during a 2018 talk in Berlin branded the Philippines as “patient zero in the global disinformation epidemic.”;

WHEREAS, in March 2019, Facebook also took down 200 pages of groups and accounts also for CIB. These sites were attributed to a network organized by Nick Gabunada, identified as President Duterte’s social media manager in the 2016 elections;

WHEREAS, in a similar incident, Facebook also banned Twinmark Media Enterprises and all its subsidiaries because of “coordinated inauthentic behavior, use of fake accounts, leading people to ad farms, and selling access to Facebook Pages.” Among the Twinmark pages is the Trending News Portal made popular by the former assistant secretary of the Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO) and now Deputy Executive Director of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) Mocha Uson;

WHEREAS, the institutionalized use of troll farms and troll armies, especially of the Philippine security and defense agencies, are a serious threat to public information, as well as to the safety and security of the targets of these misinformation campaigns, and the members of organizations subject to terrorist or red-tagging;

WHEREAS, the red-tagging campaigns online and offline has resulted to actual killings of activists, like the brutal killings of Randall Echanis and Zara Alvarez in August 2020. Commission on Human Rights spokesperson Jacqueline De Guia described the killing of Zara Alvarez as “another addition to the alarming string of attacks against human rights workers and advocates in the country. The [CHR] sees this as a cause for concern, especially that the number of cases is still growing and justice is nowhere in sight. CHR stresses [...] that the act of red-tagging of human-rights defenders alone already constitutes a grave threat to their lives, liberty, and security. Further, tagging human rights workers and advocates as terrorists distorts the nature of their work and makes them open, legitimate targets to attacks and a number of violations.”;

WHEREAS, the use of public funds to finance such dubious operations of massive misinformation is also a cause for serious concern. In the same Facebook statement, it indicated that these sites used $1,100 in ads. However, the true cost of buying and running a troll farm could run up to billions. A troll company could charge a single politician $38,000-$57,000 (P1.9 million to P2.85 million per month). For an entire government, the amount could be a thousand fold;

WHEREAS, there is an urgent need to probe the possible use of public funds to buy, create, or maintain troll armies in social media platforms. The AFP and the PNP must uncover all costs of these operations traced to their agencies, as well as the companies or personnel they have hired to conduct these operations. Alarming, President Duterte has granted the National Task NTF-

7 Ibid
ELCAC around P36.439 billion for 2020-2021\textsuperscript{12};

\textbf{WHEREAS}, especially in this time of crisis aggravated by the coronavirus pandemic, the use of public funds to finance such schemes is a travesty to public trust and accountability. Furthermore, the manipulation of information in social media also threatens basic rights, including internet freedoms. The use of paid commenters and bots to spread anti-democratic propaganda and suppress dissent is dangerous to our democracy and people;

\textbf{NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED}, that the House of Representatives conduct an investigation, in aid of legislation, on the use of social media platforms by the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police for terrorist and red-tagging and demonizing progressive organizations as reported by Facebook, and its possible use of public funds to finance these operations.

\textit{Approved,

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\textsuperscript{12}https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1091220 Retrieval 24 September 2020