FIFTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE) REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES) First Regular Session)

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S E N A T E P.S. RES. NO. <u>23</u>3

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Introduced by Senator Manny B. Villar

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS, JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS AND YOUTH, WOMEN AND FAMILY RELATIONS, TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE REPORTED INCREASING NUMBER OF RAPE AND ABUSE CASES PERPETRATED AGAINST OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS, WITH THE END IN VIEW THAT THE PROPER GOVERNMENT AGENCIES PROMULGATE POLICIES AND PROGRAM THAT WILL MEANINGFULLY ADDRESS THE SORROWFUL PLIGHT OF OUR WORKERS ABROAD

Whereas, 1987 Constitution, Article II Section 18 provides that "[t]he State affirms labor as a primary social economic force. It shall protect the rights of workers and promote their welfare";

Whereas, Section 2(d) of the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995 declares that "[t]he State affirms the fundamental equality before the law of women and men and the significant role of women in nation-building. Recognizing the contribution of overseas migrant women workers and their particular vulnerabilities, the State shall apply gender sensitive criteria in the formulation and implementation of policies and programs affecting migrant workers and the composition of bodies tasked for the welfare of migrant workers";

Whereas, the 2009 Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) Overseas Employment Statistics (OES) report revealed that the Philippines is a main exporter of labor to other countries with estimated 1.4 million documented Filipinos deployed abroad as of 2009;

Whereas, these Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) has been a consistent dollar earner for the country that brought in at least \$17.3 Billion in the local economy as reported in the 2009 POEA-OES;

Whereas, according to the Philippine Commission on Women, 48.4% of these OFWs are women;

Whereas, these Filipina overseas workers are often the subject of physical and sexual abuse by their employers, some even end up dead or others are lucky enough to fly home alive but impregnated by their attackers;

Whereas, although unverified by the government, the Kapatiran sa Gitnang Silangan through the media reported that on two separate incidents, four Filipina overseas workers were reportedly raped in Riyadh, one of whom died as a result of the incident;

Whereas, the first incident involved a nurse working at the Riyadh Kharj Hospital who took a cab to go home after her company service bus left without her, while on her way home,

unidentified men stopped the taxi that she was riding. The following day the nurse was found in the desert and in serious condition and was thus brought to a hospital where she died two week later;

Whereas, the second incident involves three Pinay nurses working at the National Guard Hospital also in Riyadh, witnesses saw the nurses walking from their accommodation to a department store to buy something when a car stopped behind them and the three were forced inside the car. The three were later found in a secluded area with evidences that they suffered from a gang rape;

Whereas; these incidents are but two of the many cases, mostly undocumented, of abuse perpetrated against our Filipina overseas workers;

Whereas, these assaults to our Pinay workers abroad have been a perennial problem to the government costing the Philippine's millions of pesos of scarce resources for the OFWs' hospitalization, care and repatriation;

Whereas, the victims and their families even face a greater deal of distress and sometimes humiliation since they still have to pay outstanding placement fee loans, and rake in more debt just to finance the hospitalization and rehabilitation expenses of the OFW victim once in the Philippines;

Whereas, considering the foregoing, it is clear that the government needs to revisit its current policies and rules on OFW protection and care once deployed abroad to ensure that proper support, be it legal or health, shall be extended to those who needs it;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, to direct the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Justice and Human Rights and Youth, Women and Family relations, to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the reported increasing number of rape and abuse cases perpetrated against Overseas Filipino Workers, with the end in view that the proper government agencies promulgate policies and program that will meaningfully address the sorrowful plight of our workers abroad.

Adopted.

Mary WU