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SENATE  
P.S. Res 636

RECEIVED BY: 

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Introduced by Senator Poe

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**RESOLUTION**

**URGING THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON LABOR, EMPLOYMENT AND HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT AND FOREIGN RELATIONS TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, INTO THE RECENT DEATHS OF JOANNA DANIELA DEMAPELIS AND JOSIE LLOREN, AS WELL AS SIMILAR MALTREATMENTS AND DEATHS OF OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS (OFWS) THROUGH THE YEARS, WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF FORMULATING EFFECTIVE MEASURES AND POLICIES TO PROACTIVELY AND EFFICIENTLY ASSIST AND PROTECT OUR MIGRANT WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER DEPLOYMENT**

**WHEREAS**, according to the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration's (POEA) latest (2015) "Compendium of OFW Statistics", there are 2,343,692 land- and sea-based OFWs broken down as follows:

Land-based	-	1,823,715
(new hires)	-	614,748
(rehires)	-	1,208,967
Sea-based	-	519,977

**WHEREAS**, still based on the POEA's 2015 Compendium, here are the places of deployment of our land-based OFWs:

Middle East	-	913,958
Asia	-	399,361
Europe	-	29,029
Americas	-	17,234
Africa	-	18,226

Trust Territories	-	4,777
Oceania	-	18,850
Others	-	36,440

**WHEREAS**, in the Philippine Statistics Authority’s (PSA) “2016 Survey on Overseas Filipinos”, it was found out 53.6% of our OFWs are females;

**WHEREAS**, according to data from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), cash remittances from our OFWs for the year 2016 reached a record \$26.9 Billion, which was bigger by 5% compared to 2015’s \$25.61 Billion;

**WHEREAS**, clearly, our OFWs’ contribution to our economy is not negligible and their cash remittances fuel the hopes and dreams for a brighter future of their loved ones in the Philippines. Moreover, we oftentimes associate the terms “pasalubong”, “balikbayan box” and “big time” to our OFWs;

**WHEREAS**, despite the overall positive impact brought to us by our OFWs, we seem to fail to acknowledge and address the problems and issues they encounter thousands of miles away from the comforts of their families and homes in the Philippines;

**WHEREAS**, according to reports and researches in relation to our OFWs, the top four problems they encounter are very much intertwined: (a) illegal recruitment; (b) exorbitant placement fees; (c) abusive employers; and (d) indictments of crimes they did not commit;

**WHEREAS**, illegal recruitment has various forms and the most common, and most dangerous, is the form wherein the terms and conditions in the signed and agreed upon POEA-approved employment contract are not different from the actual and real terms and conditions of jobs abroad. Thousands of miles away from home, our OFWs are left with no choice but to endure low salaries, harder jobs, inhumane working conditions and abusive employers in order to make up for their lifetime savings spent as their placement fees and to be able to send money back to their loved ones in the Philippines;

**WHEREAS**, just recently, another OFW, in the person of **JOANNA DANIELA DEMA FELIS**, had once again fallen prey to abusive employers. Demafelis’ lifeless body was found inside a freezer in an abandoned apartment in Kuwait earlier this month. The autopsy report showed that Demafelis died due to SEVERE BEATING as she was found to have several broken ribs and contusion and trauma in the pelvis and kidney area, and found to have suffered from internal bleeding;

**WHEREAS**, migrant worker **JOSIE LLOREN**, also allegedly suffered abuse in the hands of her employers in Kuwait after working in the gulf state since 2015 and returned to the country gravely-ill on January 26, 2018 and died on February 9, 2018;

**WHEREAS**, on 9 February 2018, President Duterte lashed out at Kuwait where he said has seen at least 82 deaths of OFWs in 2016 alone. Thereafter, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) had ordered a deployment ban to Kuwait;

**WHEREAS**, Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III ordered the removal of Overseas Worker Welfare Officer Maria Sarah Concepcion on her alleged failure to promptly act on the case of Demafelis. The removal of Concepcion came after her explanation that it was impossible for her to accommodate all requests for assistance from Filipinos working in Kuwait or their families as she receives an average 15 requests for assistance daily;

**WHEREAS**, the saddening maltreatment and death of Demafelis is not something new in the circle of our OFWs. In 2016, an OFW in Saudi Arabia, **IRMA AVILA EDLOY**, died due to severe injuries from suspected sexual assault. In 2017, an OFW in Jordan, **FELMA MARAMAG**, was allegedly killed by 2 Jordanians. The list goes on from way back and all around the world including the infamous **FLOR CONTEMPLACION** story in 1995;

**WHEREAS**, the latest POEA Rules and Regulations Governing the Recruitment and Employment of sea- and land-based OFWs grandly proclaim the following policies:

1. To uphold the dignity and fundamental human rights of OFWs and promote full employment and equality of employment opportunities for all;
2. To protect every citizen desiring to work overseas by securing the best possible terms and conditions of employment;
3. To allow the deployment of OFWs only in countries where their rights are protected;

**WHEREAS**, it appears that the above-enumerated policies are only good on paper as we have continuously failed to protect our OFWs around the world as we have always been keen on after-the-fact, knee jerk and short-term measures;

**WHEREAS**, there is a need for a thorough, objective and no-nonsense assessment and review on our existing laws and policies in relation to:

1. Close monitoring of the implementation of POEA-approved standard employment contracts in the post-deployment stage;
2. Rationalization of additional human and financial resources to various embassies and/or Philippine Overseas Labor Offices (POLO) around the world;
3. Immediate rendering of much needed assistance of whatever form to OFWs in distress all over the world;
4. OFW-centered diplomacy;
5. Re-training, livelihood/economic assistance for OFWs and their families; and
6. Proactive and dynamic built-in measures to improve and safeguard conditions of OFWs around the world;

**WHEREAS**, it is high time that we value the faces and stories behind the statistics and numbers related to our OFWs and to acknowledge and recognize their “cries” behind the scenes abroad only to ensure the “smiles” of their loved ones at home;

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED**, by the Senate of the Philippines, to urge the Senate Committees on Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development and Foreign Relations to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, into the recent deaths of Joanna Daniela Demafelis and Josie Lloren, as well as similar maltreatments and deaths of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) all over the world through the years, with the objective of formulating effective measures and policies to proactively and efficiently assist and protect our OFWs and their families before, during and after deployment.

*Adopted,*

  
**GRACE POE**