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SENATE
P.S.R. NO. 764

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Introduced by Senator Risa Hontiveros

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ORDER AND DANGEROUS DRUGS TO CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION IN AID OF LEGISLATION ON THE SPATE OF KILLINGS AND ATTEMPTED KILLINGS OF CATHOLIC PRIESTS

WHEREAS, on June 10, 2018, as Fr. Richmond Nilo of the Diocese of Cabanatuan was about to celebrate mass in a small chapel at Barangay Mayamot, he was gunned down by unidentified assailants two to three meters away from the altar¹;

WHEREAS, only a little more than a month before, on April 29, 2018, Cagayan priest Fr. Mark Ventura – known for his anti-mining stance and his close ties with indigenous communities -- was shot dead by riding-in-tandem assassins as he was blessing children after celebrating mass in Barangay Pina Weste in Gattaran, Cagayan²;

WHEREAS, last year, on December 4, Father Marcelito “Tito” Paez, remembered for his activism and his commitment to human rights, was felled by bullets as he was driving home after facilitating the release of a political prisoner³;

WHEREAS, on June 6, Fr. Rey Urmeneta of Calamba, Laguna, a former police chaplain, was severely wounded and rushed to the hospital after being shot at by unidentified assailants;

WHEREAS, these killings and attempted killing come on the heels of continued verbal attacks of President Rodrigo Duterte on the Catholic Church and its religious leaders particularly in light of the Catholic Church’s strong critique of the present administration’s War on Drugs policy, with the President even releasing a matrix maligning the name of Father Ventura after his death⁴;

WHEREAS, these verbal attacks as well the dismissive attitude towards the killings may result in even more priest-murders and other acts of violence against members of religious communities;

¹ <https://www.rappler.com/nation/204708-richmond-nilo-trailed-before-shooting-cabanatuan-chapel>

² <https://www.rappler.com/nation/201991-slain-cagayan-priest-mark-ventura-laid-to-rest>

³ <https://www.rappler.com/nation/191044-slain-nueva-ecija-priest-tito-paez-laid-to-rest>

⁴ <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/653994/duterte-shows-matrix-of-slain-priest-s-suspected-illicit-affairs/story/>

WHEREAS, given this current political climate, these killings further reinforce the culture of impunity to silence valid Church-led criticisms on state policies, particularly those with respect to human rights and due process;

BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS RESOLVED, by the Senate of the Philippines to direct the Senate Committee on Public Order and Dangerous Drugs to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the spate of killings and attempted killings of Catholic priests;

Adopted,

~~Senator Risa Hontiveros~~ *Risa Hontiveros*
SENATOR RISA HONTIVEROS