

ACCOMPLISHMENT REPORT

Committee on Civil, Political and Human Rights

Second Regular Session

14th Congress

July 29, 2008 to June 2009

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As in the First Regular Session, the Second Regular Session was a productive period for the Committee on Human Rights. Chaired by Rep. Lorenzo “Erin” R. Tañada III, the Committee was considered as one of the busiest committees of the House during the period.

The Committee posted the second highest number of meetings among the committees under Cluster 5 of the Committee Affairs Department. It has conducted a total of 21 committee meetings and public hearings. Seventeen (17) of those were conducted within the House, three (3) were conducted on out-of-town venues and one (1) ocular inspection. It has made four (4) committee reports and conducted ten (10) special projects.

As for staff development, the Committee sent its staff to a total of eleven (11) seminars and trainings within the country relative to human rights, its promotion and other related topics.

Bills/Resolutions Tackled

A total of Forty two (42) bills, resolutions and privilege speeches were referred to the Committee during the period. These include 3 bills, 35 resolutions and 6 privilege speeches. With these new referrals, the total bills, resolutions and privilege speeches referred to the committee has reached One Hundred Six (106). Of this number Fifty five (55) bills and resolutions or 51.9% of the total number, were acted upon by the Committee.

Among the House Bills acted upon were those: Defining and Prescribing Penalties for Extra-Judicial Killings; Strengthening the Charter of the Commission on Human Rights; Regulating the use of Emblems; Penalizing Acts of Torture; Providing Compensation and Protection for Internally Displaced Persons; Defining and Penalizing Crimes Against International Humanitarian Law; and those bills Defining and Penalizing Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances.

Also tackled were bills on the Rights of the Accused; Press Freedom, Freedom of Expression and of Assembly and anti- Sexual Discrimination.

Resolutions and privilege speeches referred to the Committee mostly deal with extra-judicial killings, abductions, arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances and tortures, displacements, abuses of men in uniform, and the ID system in Sulu.

Most of these bills and resolutions are still under committee deliberations and some are under TWG discussions.

HB No. 6443, An Act Defining the Use and Protection of the Red Cross, Red Crescent, Red Crystal, and Red Lion and Sun Emblems, Providing Penalties for Violations, thereof, also known as the Emblem bill was approved on Second Reading on June 3, 2009.

HB 5709 the Anti-Torture, HB 5864 on the compensation for the Internally Displaced, HB 5886 on Involuntary and Enforced Disappearance were approved on Third Reading on March 5, 2009.

Committee Meetings/Public Hearings

The Committee conducted a total of 21 Committee meetings during the period. Among these meetings were those conducted in Davao, Pampanga and Baguio on the alleged extra-judicial killings.

Worth noting were the series of meetings and technical working groups (TWGs) conducted for purposes of finalizing the draft of different bills. These were mainly on the proposed charter of the Commission on Human Rights; HB 566 defining the crime of extra-judicial killings. Executive sessions were also called to finalize the draft of the aforementioned measures.

Committee Reports

The Committee submitted four (4) Committee Reports of the following bills: on Internally Displaced, Anti-Torture, Emblem bills, and Involuntary Disappearance.

Special Projects/Activities

Giving more meaning to its mandate and advocacies, the Committee initiated some special projects and activities promoting Human Rights and Human Rights Consciousness in the House of Representatives in collaboration with other Human Rights Groups.

Foremost of these activities was the Human Rights Week which was successfully conducted on the second week of December in time for the celebration of the International Human Rights Day on December 10.

Also significant to note was the Human Rights Watch which was launched on May 13, 2008. This is a nationwide campaign aimed at providing a forum to immediately address the escalating human rights violations in the country.

Other activities, in addition to those mentioned, include:

1. Teach-in Session with the Committee on Justice on the International Humanitarian Law and Emblem Bills conducted by the ICRC (January 28, 2009).
2. Focus Group Discussion on IDP conducted by the Balay Foundation. (February 12-13, 2009).
3. Informal meeting with Action Network Human Rights of Germany. (March 16, 2009)
4. Forum on IHL (joint with the Committee on Justice) and Opening of the Exhibit of the PNRC and ICRC. (April 13, 2009).
5. SELDA Exhibit on the Marcos Compensation for Human Rights Victims (April 15, 2009)
6. Press Conference on the Right of Reply Bill (May 18, 2009).
7. Meeting with Just Detention International, a US based NGO on Prison Rape and Prison Reforms. (June 2, 2009).

International Conferences/Foreign Trips

The Chair, Rep. Lorenzo R. Tañada III, attended a number of international conferences, and different fora and visited international offices to strengthen linkages of the Committee and other International Human Rights Organizations.

Representative Tañada participated in discussions with the United Nations Committee Against Torture on 27 April 2009 where he articulated the legislative concerns of the House on the subject.

On 25 April 2009 the Chair met with Ms. Ingeborg Schwarz, Secretary of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Geneva, Switzerland. The meeting was organized by the Geneva Forum for Philippine Concerns, a NGO support group for Filipinos and works for the promotion and protection of human rights. The IPU is an organization of Parliaments of sovereign states and considered a focal point for worldwide parliamentary dialogue. It works for peace and cooperation among peoples and for the firm establishment of representative democracy. It also contributes to the defense and promotion of human rights.

On this occasion, Representative Tañada shared the Philippine experience in crafting legislation on human rights concerns and the participation of the legislature in the treaty reporting process of the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

On 26 and 29 April 2009, Rep. Tañada attended the Orientation of the Geneva Forum for Philippine Concerns and Reflections on the Dialogue with the Committee and the implementation of the Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

Also, on 29 September 2008, the Chair attended a meeting on Capital Punishment on Rome, Italy.

Local Travels

Representative Tañada also made the following local travels relative to his Human Rights advocacies and in his capacity as Chair of the Committee:

1. July 2, 2008 - Symposium on Human Rights, Aringay Elem. School, La Union.
2. July 10, 2008 - Talk on Human Rights Issues, Silliman University, Dumaguete City.
3. August 8, 2008 - PHILJA - Panel Discussion on EJK & enforced Disappearances, Marco Polo Hotel, Davao City.
4. Sep. 18 - 2008 - CADP- Forum on Anti- Torture, Davao City.
5. Jan 30 2009 - PHILJA - Panel Discussion on Extra Judicial Killings, Davao City.
6. Feb 5, 2009 - Talk on HR issues, UP- Cebu and University of San Carlos, Cebu City.
7. Feb 6, 2009 - Talk on HR issues, University of the Visayas, Cebu City.
8. March 9, 2009 - Commission on HR: Govt-Civil Society Trust Building Dialogue to Improve Human Rights, Davao City.
9. March 27, 2009 - PHILJA Forum on Extra Judicial Killings, Laoag City.