Republic of the Philippines

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION No. __________

Introduced by
BAYAN MUNA Representatives CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE,
FERDINAND R. GAITE and EUFEMIA C. CULLAMAT

RESOLUTION URGING THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION AND
COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY TO CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION, IN
AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE SCOURGE OF TROLL FARMS IN THE
PHILIPPINES AND ITS RECENT ATTACK OF IMPERSONATING ACCOUNTS
ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND HARASSING PROTESTERS AND GOVERNMENT
CRITICS

WHEREAS, on 7 June 2020, netizens sounded the alarm on the emergence of newly created
accounts in popular social media site Facebook bearing their names. First to notice of this takery
were netizens from Cebu City who reported duplicate accounts of students from University of
the Philippines-Cebu who were arrested and detained during a June 5 protest against the Anti-
Terror Bill (ATB);

WHEREAS, other activists and netizens, soon, also reported the impersonating Facebook
accounts which bears their full names. Concern that the protests against the controversial ATB is
to blame for the manufacturing of fake accounts began to mount, with netizens fearing that
dissent against the draconian bill would make them targets for attacks;

WHEREAS, later in the same day, the handlers of the poser accounts sent threatening
messages, ranging from red-tagging to murder. Members of the media and activists are among
the people who received such messages from their poser accounts;

WHEREAS, suspicions then were raised that the poser accounts are the product of “troll
farms.” The use of “troll farms” is prevalent according to a study done in 2017. A troll farm or
troll factory is an institutionalized group of internet trolls aimed to interfere in political opinions
and decision-making;

WHEREAS, in March 2019, Nathaniel Gleicher, Head of Cybersecurity Policy of Facebook,
attributed the “coordinated inauthentic behavior” on their popular social media site, and, has
deleted 200 pages groups and accounts. Despite the attempt to cover their tracks, these sites
were attributed to a network organized by a certain Nick Gabunada, who was 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

democracy
campaign-social-media-manager-march-2019
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, in 2018, Facebook removed a network of 95 Pages and 39 accounts for “violating
our spam and authenticity policies by encouraging people to visit low quality websites that
contain little substantive content and are full of disruptive ads.” Among these removed pages
include names like Duterte Media, Duterte sa Pagbaba BUKAS, DDS, Duterte Phenomenon,
DU30 Trending News, Manang Imee, and Karlo ang Probinsiyanò;
WHEREAS, more recently, another popular socmed site, Twitter, also suspended “hundreds of
accounts” tweeting under hashtags defending the response of Philippine President Rodrigo
Duterte’s government to the COVID-19 pandemic.† It also took down hundreds of suspicious
accounts using pro-government hashtags — among them, #YesToABSCBNshutdown†;
WHEREAS, the manipulation of information in social media threatens internet freedoms. The
use of paid commenters and bots to spread anti-democratic propaganda and suppress dissent is
dangerous to our democracy and people. Red-tagging of activists, government critics, and even
opposition government officials are prevalent in social media, and even in official government
social media sites. Red-tagging has resulted in actual killings or incarceration of many, including
activists, lawyers, and other government critics;
WHEREAS, the proliferation of duplicate accounts, which is suspected to be another nefarious
activity of troll farms, and the threatening messages sent to activists right after the outpouring
of support to junk the Anti-Terror Bill should be subjected to scrutiny by Congress to protect
our democracy and internet freedoms;
NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the House of Representatives, through its
Committee on Information and Communications Technology, to conduct an investigation, in aid
of legislation, on the scourge of troll farms in the Philippines and its recent attack of
impersonating accounts on social media and harassing of protesters and government critics.

Approved,

REP. CARLOS ISAQANI T. ZARATE
Bayan Muna Partylist

REP. EUDERINDA R. GAITE
Bayan Muna Partylist

REP. EUFEMIA C. CULLAMAT
Bayan Muna Partylist

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6 Ibid
8 https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/philippines-orders-its-largest-broadcaster-off-the-air-as-
ation-fights-virus/2020/05/05/3d172b60-8eb4-11ea-9322-a29e75effc93_story.html