Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION No. 1590

Introduced by
BAYAN MUNA Representatives EUFEMIA C. CULLAMAT,
CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE and FERDINAND R. GAITE,
GABRIELA Women’s Party Representative ARLENE D. BROSAS,
ACT TEACHERS Party-List Representative FRANCE L. CASTRO,
and KABATAAN Party-List Representative SARAH JANE I. ELAGO

RESOLUTION
URGING THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES THROUGH THE COMMITTEE
ON HUMAN RIGHTS, TO CONDEMN AND INVESTIGATE, THE RAID AND
MASS ARREST AGAINST LUMAD EVACUEES SEEKING SANCTUARY IN
TALAMBAR, CEBU BY ELEMENTS OF THE POLICE AND MILITARY

WHEREAS, on February 15, 2021, members of the Philippine National Police (PNP) Regional
Office-7, along with members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, elements of the paramilitary
group Alamara, together with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD)
forcibly entered the sanctuary of Lumad evacuees at the Lumad Bakwit School housed at the
University of San Carlos – Talamban Campus in Cebu. Police officers forcibly took into custody
twenty-one (21) Lumad students along with two (2) teachers and two (2) Lumad elders;

WHEREAS, according to the PNP Region 7, they were conducting “rescue operations” of minors
and indigenous people. However, video recordings of the incident evidently showed man-handling
and use of force by the police against visibly terrified Lumad evacuees. In an interview by local
media outlet The Freeman, Datu Benito Bay-a0, one of the elders at the Bakwit School, stated that
they were in Cebu to seek sanctuary and gather support for their struggle to defend ancestral lands;

WHEREAS, in a joint statement, the Societas Verbi Divini (SVD) Philippines Southern Province
and the University of San Carlos (USC) clarified that they supported the project of a bakwit school
program by the Archdiocese of Cebu – Commission on Social Advocacies (COSA) with the Save
Our Schools Network. According to the statement, the SVD hosted forty-two (42) students
accompanied by five (5) teachers and three (3) community elders (datu) after other educational
institutions in Cebu hosted the bakwit school. The delegation was set to return to their
communities upon completion of their modular schooling on April 3, 2020. Due to the Covid-19
pandemic, they were instead return to their communities in batches. In the same statement, the
SVD and USC expressed their surprise over reports of a “rescue” operation stating that no rescue
was ever needed;

WHEREAS, according to the Save Our Schools Network, teachers, parents, and students from
different Lumad schools in Mindanao mounted the Bakwit School in Cebu since 2019. After
intense militarization in Lumad communities and the forcible closure of their schools, indigenous
communities in Mindanao decided to launch the “bakwit school” to show the rest of the country
the state of Lumad schools in Mindanao and to enable indigenous youth to continue their studies;

WHEREAS, since 2014, around 500 Lumad evacuees have taken sanctuary in premises of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) - Haran in Davao City due to militarization of their communities. Of Lumad evacuees point to mining and logging interests in their ancestral lands in Talain and Kapalong as the reason for the increased military and paramilitary presence in their communities.

WHEREAS, the forcible entry and alleged “rescue operations” of the police and military are not new to Lumad evacuees. In July 2015, police and local officials forcibly entered the UCCP-Haran sanctuary of Lumad evacuees to “rescue” evacuees. In January 2020, bolo-wielding members of the paramilitary group Alamara forcibly entered the same UCCP Haran Compound to force evacuees to return to their communities despite continuing militarization. The indigenous communities in evacuation, through their organization PASAKA, a confederation of Lumad Organizations in Southern Mindanao, have condemned these false “rescue operations” and harassment;

WHEREAS, prior to the incident, the Lumad Bakwit School has been subjected to intense red-tagging by the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC). The raid on the Lumad Bakwit School and arrest of its students, teachers, and elders are the most recent among a series of attacks against indigenous communities. The incident shows the dangers brought by red-tagging being done by the NTF-ELCAC and government forces;

WHEREAS, the education of indigenous youth in Mindanao through their community-built schools has been under constant threat. In October 2019, the Department of Education issued an order for the closure of fifty-five (55) Lumad schools. According to the Save Our Schools Network, as of September 2020, due to forcible closures and militarization only thirty-eight (38) Lumad schools remained out of 216 indigenous schools in Mindanao. This has led to the disenfranchisement of an estimated 5,500 students;

WHEREAS, the violent raid and arrest conducted by the police against indigenous people merely seeking sanctuary amid the pandemic is highly condemnable. It is imperative for members of Congress, as representatives of our people, to defend the rights of our people and check on excesses and violations committed against them, especially in this time of crisis. Laws and rules should serve the interest of our people, and should not be weaponized to suppress their rights and oppress them;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, that the House of Representatives, through the Committee on Human Rights, condemn and investigate the raid and mass arrest against Lumad evacuees seeking sanctuary in Talain, Cebu by elements of the police and military.
Adopted,

REP. BUFEMLA C. CULLAMAT
Bayan Muna Partylist

REP. CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE
Bayan Muna Partylist

REP. ARLENE D. BROSAS
GABRIELA Women's Party

REP. SARAH JANE I. ELAGO
Kabataan Partylist

REP. FERDINAND R. GAITE
Bayan Muna Partylist

REP. FRANCE L. CASTRO
ACT Teachers Partylist