Republic of the Philippines

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
Third Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION No. 1903

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 SARA H JANE I. ELAGO

RESOLUTION
URGING THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES THROUGH THE COMMITTEE
ON HUMAN RIGHTS TO CONDEMN, AND, CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION,
IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE BRUTAL MASSACRE OF THREE (3)
CIVILIANS INCLUDING A 12-YEAR-OLD CHILD PERPETRATED BY
ELEMENTS OF THE 3RD SPECIAL FORCES BATTALION IN BRGY.
DIATAGON, LIANGA, SURIGAO DEL SUR

WHEREAS, on June 15, 2021, at around 1 PM, elements of the 3rd Special Forces Battalion
(SFB) of the Philippine Army indiscriminately fired upon a group of six (6) farmers harvesting
farmers, including a 12-year-old child, were killed while three (3) others were able to run away.
The victims, all residents of Sitio Manluy-a, Brgy. Diatagon, were identified as:

1. Willy Rodriguez, 38 years old, member of Lumad organization Malahutayong Pakigbisog
   Alang sa Sumusunod (MAPASU);
2. Lenie Rivas, 20 years old, member of MAPASU;
3. Angel Rivas, 12 years old, a former student of Lumad school Tribal Filipino Program of
   Surigao del Sur (TRIFPSS), student of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) of the
   Department of Education;

WHEREAS, the victims’ bodies were reportedly then brought to the military brigade
headquarters in St. Christine, Lianga, where they were presented as slain rebels of the New
People’s Army;

WHEREAS, family and community members strongly belied the claims as the victims even
asked permission from the military before going to the farm. According to family members,
Angel Rivas joined her family in harvesting abaca to earn money for transportation to submit her
learning modules. Angel was enrolled under the Department of Education’s Alternative Learning
System program;

WHEREAS, family members who identified the bodies also claimed that the victims’ remains
were desecrated. The female victims’ genitals were torn bearing signs of possible molestation or
rape. Angel Rivas’ face was beyond recognition and needed multiple stitches. Willy Rodriguez had multiple broken bones in his arms which was held together only by packaging tape;

WHEREAS, military troops of the 3rd SFB led by Captain Aranas and the 48th Infantry Battalion Philippine Army (IBPA) have been encamping in the community since August 2019 and have set up a military detachment in Km. 18, Brgy. Diatagon. The ancestral lands in the Brgy. Diatagon has been heavily militarized for over a decade now;

WHEREAS, residents have called for the pull-out of troops encamped in their communities for fear of harassment and killings citing previous cases of rights violations committed by military forces. on January 24, 2019, two (2) Lumad-Manobo farmers Emel Tejero and Randel Gallego were shot dead by soldiers of the 36th IB who opened fire on them while they were harvesting abaca in their farms. It can also be recalled that on September 1, 2015, paramilitary group Magahat-Bagani, aided by members of the 75th Infantry Battalion, brutally massacred three (3) civilians in Sitio Han-ayan, Brgy. Diatagon. Among the victims were datu Jovello Sinzo, MAPASU Chairperson Dionel Campos, and Alternative Learning Center for Agricultural and Livelihood Development (ALCADEV) school director Emerito Samarca;

WHEREAS, MAPASU is an organization of Lumad in Surigao del Sur. The organization has been active in launching campaigns in defense of ancestral lands from large-scale foreign mining companies and other forms of development aggression. Because of its active resistance, MAPASU leaders and members have been the target of intensified red-tagging and vilification by state forces especially by the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC);

WHEREAS, the Lumad communities in Brgy. Diatagon and in neighboring areas in Surigao del Sur are situated in the Andap Valley complex which is known to be rich in coal, nickel, gold, and other mineral reserves. The area has long been the target of mining companies. In February 2018, at an Indigenous Peoples Leaders’ Summit, President Rodrigo Duterte himself stated that he would personally choose investors of palm oil plantations and mining operations for ancestral lands, including the Andap Valley Complex. According to environmental group Caraga Watch, the following corporations are set to operate in the area: Benguet Corp., Abacus Coal Exploration and Development Corp., Great Wall Mining and Power Corp., ASK Mining and Exploration Corp. (exploration phase), and CoalBlack Mining Corporation;

WHEREAS, according to Karapatan, this has been the 25th Massacre under the Duterte administration’s counterinsurgency campaign killing a total of 121 individuals. Other incidents of mass killings against civilians were reportedly documented in Sumilao, Bukidnon; Palayan, Nueva Ecija; Masbate City and Cawayan, Mobo and Mandaon towns, Masbate; San Nicolas, Pangasinan; Gubat and Bulan towns, Sorsogon; Lake Sebu and Polomolok towns, South Cotabato; Siaton, Negros Oriental; Bato and Ragay towns, Camarines Sur; Matalam, Cotabato; Antique; Patikul, Sulu; Baguio City; Polomok, South Cotabato; Kabacan, North Cotabato; Baras, Rizal; Capiz; and Sta. Rosa, Laguna;

WHEREAS, the brutal massacre of civilians by forces of the 3rd SFB is highly condemnable. The killing of civilians and the desecration of their remains are gross violations of the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHIHL) and International Humanitarian Law. A thorough and impartial investigation on the massacre should be conducted to hold perpetrators accountable and to prevent any more massacres and rights violations;
WHEREAS, 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, especially in this time of crisis. It must bring perpetrators to account to put a stop to the killings and rights violations against its people. 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, to condemn and conduct an investigation, in aid of legislation, on the brutal massacre of three (3) civilians, including a 12-year-old minor, perpetrated on June 15, 2021 by elements of the 3rd Special Forces Battalion in Brgy. Diatagon, Lianga, Surigao del Sur.

Adopted,

REP. EUTEMIA 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