

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Batasan Hills, Quezon City

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL No. 2801



Introduced by
ACT Teachers Party-List Rep. FRANCE L. CASTRO,
GABRIELA Women’s Party Rep. ARLENE D. BROSAS,
and **KABATAAN Party-List Rep. RAOUL DANNIEL A. MANUEL**

AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR MANDATORY ADDITIONAL INSURANCE COVERAGE
AND BENEFITS FOR JOURNALISTS, EMPLOYEES OF MEDIA ENTITIES
ON FIELD ASSIGNMENT, AND FREELANCE JOURNALISTS, AND FOR
OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Philippines is considered the oldest democracy in Asia. Likewise, the Philippine press is lauded to be “extremely vibrant.”¹ The watchdog function of the media or “the Fourth Estate,” is one of the most essential elements of a working democracy, ensuring transparency, public information, another layer of checks and balances on government, among others.

But the Marcos dictatorship along with the tyrannical regimes such as Duterte’s and even today’s period of rising authoritarianism, reveal the dangers of having the media muzzled. However, the Philippines is consistently among the top countries most lethal to members of the media thirty years after the Marcos dictatorship.

The Philippines is the seventh deadliest country for journalists, with 13 unsolved media murders within a span of ten years, according to the 2021 Global Impunity Index of New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). Majority of those killed

¹ 2022 press freedom index. Reporters sans frontieres, 2022. <https://rsf.org/en/country/philippines>.

were covering politics, corruption, and crime. Only a handful of cases have been resolved, and partially, at that.²

Another global journalist rights monitor, *Reporters sans frontieres* (RSF, Reporters Without Borders), also censured the Philippines for putting up a bleak politico-legal climate, where red-tagging, criminal libel, and various forms of attacks against media and media workers are rife—a climate where “impunity for these crimes is almost total.” In RSF’s 2022 press freedom index, the Philippines ranked 147th out of 180 countries, sliding several notches below last year’s ranking.

The National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP) recorded 195 media workers killed since April 1986 in the line of duty or in retaliation for their work. This includes the single bloodiest attack against journalists and media workers, the 2009 Maguindanao Massacre, which is still unsolved up to this day. A total of 31 journalists were killed by the end of Aquino administration, and at least 23 journalists including 15 radio personalities were killed under the Duterte administration, according to the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR).³

These numbers do not include acts of intimidation, harassment, threats, and other attacks under the systematic campaign of targeting the press, such as the closure of ABS-CBN and the cyberattacks against online media. Red-tagging—that vile tool of the State to silence any critique and any critic, and a precursor to extrajudicial killings, trumped-up charges, and other rights violations—is also used against reporters and media workers.

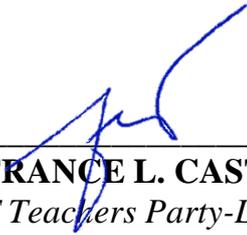
It is in this context of continuing killings of journalists and other workers in the media, and the worsening impunity accompanying these attacks, that this bill seeks additional insurance coverage and benefits for media practitioners and their families. A commitment to protect the media and to ensure their independence includes the passage of laws that will answer their and their families’ urgent needs, while awaiting the resolution of their cases, should they fall or be hurt in the line of duty.

This bill was first filed in the 15th Congress by Reps. Teddy A. Casiño, Neri Javier Colmenares, Rafael V. Mariano, Luzviminda C. Ilagan, Raymond V. Palatino, Emerenciana A. De Jesus, and Antonio L. Tinio of the Makabayang Koalisyon ng Mamamayan or Makabayan. Refiled in the 16th up to 18th Congresses, this bill is now being refiled in the hopes of somehow shining a light on the dark and deadly path that journalists tread.

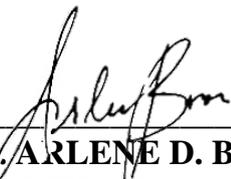
² Dunham, Jeniffer. “Killers of journalists still get away with murder.” Committee to Protect Journalists, 28 October 2021. <https://cpj.org/reports/2021/10/killers-of-journalists-still-get-away-with-murder/>.

³ “WATCH | The State of Media Freedom in the Philippines 2022: Journalism under siege.” Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, 3 May 2022. <https://pcij.org/blog/3333/watch-the-state-of-media-freedom-in-the-philippines-2022-journalism-under-siege>.

For these reasons, passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



Rep. FRANCE L. CASTRO
ACT Teachers Party-List



Rep. ARLENE D. BROSAS
GABRIELA Women's Party



Rep. RAOUL DANNIEL A. MANUEL
KABATAAN Party-List

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Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. Short Title. – This Act shall be known as the “*Journalists’ Insurance Act of 2022.*”

SEC. 2. Definition of Terms. – For purposes of this Act, the following terms shall mean:

- 1. Media entities** refer to all companies in the print and broadcast media (newspapers, radio, television, and online) that are involved in the dissemination of news and information for public consumption and are duly accredited by any reputable association of media persons such as, but not limited to the Office of the Press Secretary-Philippine Information Agency (OPS-PIA), National Press Club (NPC), National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP), Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas (KBP), Philippine Press Institute, Foreign Correspondents of the Philippines (FOCAP), Photojournalists Center of the Philippines (PCP), and the People’s Alternative Media Network (Altermidya), as among the entities duly registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) or any other government agency;

2. **Editorial and/or News Department** refers to editors-in-chief, news editors, columnists, deskpersons, reporters, correspondents, and photographers on the part of the print media; and news editors, newscasters, commentators/announcers, field reporters, field correspondents and cameramen, video/audio editors, producers, researchers, and others who are part of news gathering, production, and dissemination on the part of the broadcast media;
3. **Frontline media persons** refer to those directly involved in data-gathering from the field and news reporting whether in print, in television, or on radio, such as but not limited to, print reporters, camera operators, photojournalists, radio reporters, and television reporters;
4. **Journalists** refers to members of the Editorial and/or News Department including front-line media persons; and
5. **Freelance Journalists** refers to persons who pursue journalism as a profession without a long-term commitment to any one media entity.

SEC. 3. *Mandatory Additional Insurance Benefits for Journalists and Employees of Media Entities on Field Assignments.* – In addition to the existing insurance benefits given to journalists and employees of media entities on field assignment by the Social Security System (SSS) as provided for under Republic Act 8282, and by the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) under Republic Act 8291, and subject to Section 5 of this Act, there shall be an additional insurance coverage to be provided by for-profit media entities to journalists and their employees on field assignments and frontline media persons which shall include, in the minimum:

1. Death Benefits of Five Hundred Thousand Pesos (₱500,000.00) for all mass media practitioners and employees on field assignment who shall perish in the line of duty;
2. Disability benefits of up to Two Hundred Thousand Pesos (₱200,000.00) for all mass media practitioners who shall suffer total or partial disability, whether permanent or temporary, arising from any injury sustained in the line of duty; and
3. Reimbursement of actual medical expenses up to but not to exceed One Hundred Thousand Pesos (₱100,000.00) for all mass media practitioners and employees on field assignment who shall be hospitalized or who shall require medical attendance for injuries sustained while in the line of duty.

The media entity shall pay for the premium of the insurance policy and shall have the option to get the insurance company to enrol its qualified journalists/employees.

SEC. 4. Coverage. – This Act shall apply to all permanent, temporary, contractual and casual journalists employed by all existing media entities in the Philippines and freelance journalists.

SEC. 5. Insurance for Freelance Journalists and Non-Profit Media Entities. – The OPS-PIA, NPC, NUJP, Altermidya, and KBP shall offer opportunities for freelance journalists to secure additional insurance coverage before working on war zones or dangerous areas. Non-profit media entities may opt to grant their employees the benefits under the preceding Sections: *Provided*, That they shall secure limited policies for their journalists and frontline media persons prior to dangerous deployments.

SEC. 6. Prohibited Acts. – The following acts shall be prohibited:

1. Refusal by a for-profit media entity to provide additional insurance coverage referred to in Section 3 of this Act;
2. Refusal by an insurance company to enroll journalists, employees of media entities on field assignment and freelance journalists on account of the nature of their work; and
3. Non-compliance with the rules and regulations that the GSIS, SSS, IC, and OPS-PIA shall adopt for the implementation of this Act.

SEC. 7. Penal Provision. – Any person who shall willfully commit any of the prohibited acts enumerated under this Act shall upon conviction, be punished by a fine of not less than Two Hundred Thousand Pesos (₱200,000.00) but not more than Five Hundred Thousand Pesos (₱500,000.00) or imprisonment of not less than one (1) year but not more than six (6) years or both such fine and imprisonment depending upon the discretion of the court.

In the case of associations, partnerships or corporations, the penalty shall be imposed on the partner, president, chief operating officer, chief executive officer, directors or officers responsible for the violation, and cancellation of registration with the SEC.

SEC. 8. Implementing Rules and Regulations. – The GSIS, SSS, IC, and OPS-PIA, and in consultation with the NPC, NUJP, KBP, and other duly registered media associations, shall promulgate and issue the rules and regulations necessary to implement the provisions of this Act.

SEC. 9. Separability Clause. – If for any reason any provision or section of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, such portions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 10. Repealing Clause. – All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 11. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,