

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

**NINETEENTH CONGRESS**  
First Regular Session

**HOUSE BILL No. 5586**



---

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**  
**MANDATING THE OBSERVANCE OF 23 NOVEMBER OF EVERY YEAR**  
**AS NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS DAY TO END IMPUNITY,**  
**AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

November 23 is the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists as proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2013 in commemoration of the assassination of two French journalists in Mali on that same day and year.

In the Philippines, November 23 is remembered as one of the grimmest incidents where 58 men and women were massacred in Ampatuan town of Maguindanao province in 2009. It is also the worst attack on press freedom in Philippine history because 32 of the victims were media practitioners. Marking it as a National Consciousness Day to End Impunity will remind us that as long as high crimes remain unpunished, the fight against injustice in the country should continue to broaden and persist.

The Philippines has been tagged this year by international media groups as one of the most dangerous places for journalists being ranked poorly or is placed among the worst worldwide for unsolved journalist murders. Key witnesses end up dead or forever fear for their lives like the ones in the Maguindanao case who were murdered, with one of them even dismembered and mutilated.

It took a decade for the Philippines to hand a verdict to the perpetrators of the Maguindanao massacre. In December 19, 2019, Quezon City Regional Trial Court Branch 221 convicted masterminds Andal Jr. and Zaldy Ampatuan and 26 accomplices, including police officials, of murder, and sentenced them to *reclusion perpetua* without parole. Meanwhile 15 were convicted as accessories and 56 other people, including Sajid Islam Ampatuan were acquitted.<sup>1</sup>

However, the case was still classified ongoing/unresolved by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). While there are 58 victims, only 57 murder convictions were handed down in the landmark verdict, excluding photojournalist Reynaldo "Bebot" Momay, who the court recognised as a victim even if his body was not found.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the families of the victims are yet to receive the damages as there are still no resolutions of the appeals on the case.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, nearly 80 other suspects are still at large.

Impunity exists whenever perpetrators of a crime are not prosecuted or are not held accountable because of their power or influence in society. Families of the victims of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and other human rights violations point to state security forces but to no avail.

The term "impunity" has attained prominence and common usage during the previous administrations. Former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's nine-year term suffered from corruption issues, electoral fraud and worsening poverty of its citizens, thus the discontent of the populace over her leadership, and increasing calls for her ouster. As a response to this growing dissent, the human rights situation under Arroyo turned to worse. Determined to stay in power, the administration institutionalized a campaign to repress forces critical of the administration through military and police force. A systematized human rights violation then took place and the result: 1,206 victims of extrajudicial killings and 206 victims of enforced disappearance perpetrated against activists and critics from among workers, peasants, women, indigenous people, students, lawyers, church people, and media practitioners.

Until now, no commitments were fulfilled to hold accountable high officials for the massive corruption and fraud under the previous administrations, and also for the gross human rights violations that will in turn serve justice to the people especially the

---

<sup>1</sup> Witchel, Elisabeth. "Ten years for justice in Maguindanao case is too long: We can do better." Committee to Protect Journalist, 19 December 2019. <https://cpj.org/2019/12/ten-years-justice-maguindanao-massacre-impunity-journalists/>

<sup>2</sup> "Joint Statement: Ampatuan massacre to remain 'unresolved.'" International Federation of Journalists, 25 September 2020. <https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/press-releases/article/joint-statement-ampatuan-massacre-to-remain-unresolved.html>

<sup>3</sup> Buan, Lian. "Maguindanao massacre appeals slow moving, 15 cops may be freed." Rappler, 23 November 2021. <https://www.rappler.com/nation/maguindanao-massacre-appeals-slow-moving-cops-may-be-freed/>

victims. Further, killings and enforced disappearance in the context of suppression of civil and political rights has already reached 427 cases for extrajudicial killings and 19 for enforced disappearances under the administration of President Rodrigo Duterte as of July 2016 to December 2021, according to human rights organization Karapatan.<sup>4</sup> These killings are on top of the tens of thousands of people killed under the flagship anti-drug policy of the Duterte government. Men, women, pregnant, and children are among the victims of extrajudicial killings under the drug war.

The police continue to refuse or stall investigations, the military persists in making blanket denials and arrest warrants against alleged perpetrators have not been executed. The climate of impunity persists.

The killings have continued—and, have in fact worsened—under the present administration. As of October 8, 2022, Karapatan documented at least ten victims of extrajudicial killings and four victims of enforced disappearances since the incumbency of President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr.<sup>5</sup> Impunity also rears its ugly head in the policy and practice of red-tagging against critics, the opposition, and ordinary citizens committed by government officials and agents as well as the private individuals they enable.

Thus, there is a need to instill awareness and spur action on the part of the government and for the people to stand up and fight for justice. The people’s clamor and demand for justice should continue to compel the government and the authorities to take action and prosecute those who are blanketed with impunity.

This Bill was first filed during the 15<sup>th</sup> Congress by Kabataan Party-List Rep. Raymond Palatino, Bayan Muna Party-List Reps. Teddy Casiño and Neri Colmenares, Gabriela Women’s Party Reps. Luz Ilagan and Emmi de Jesus, Anakpawis Party-List Rep. Rafael Mariano and ACT Teachers Party-List Rep. Antonio Tinio. It was refiled by Bayan Muna Party-List in the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> Congresses

---

<sup>4</sup> “2021 Karapatan Year-end Report on the Human Rights Situation in the Philippines.” Karapatan, 28 March 2021. <https://www.karapatan.org/2021+karapatan+year+end+report>

<sup>5</sup> “Prevailing impunity, continuing human rights violations on Marcos Jr.’s first 100 days in office.” Karapatan, 8 October 2022.

<https://www.karapatan.org/Prevailing+impunity%2C+continuing+human+rights+violations+on+Marcos+Jr.%E2%80%99s+first+100+days+in+office>

Thus, the approval of this Bill is earnestly sought.



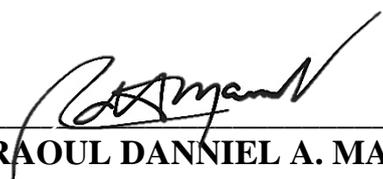
---

**Rep. FRANCE L. CASTRO**  
*ACT Teachers Party-List*



---

**Rep. ARLENE D. BROSAS**  
*GABRIELA Women's Party*



---

**Rep. RAOUL DANNIEL A. MANUEL**  
*KABATAAN Party-List*

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

**NINETEENTH CONGRESS**  
First Regular Session

**HOUSE BILL No. 5586**

---

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**  
**MANDATING THE OBSERVANCE OF 23 NOVEMBER OF EVERY YEAR**  
**AS NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS DAY TO END IMPUNITY,**  
**AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

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

**SECTION 1.** This Act shall be known as the “*National Consciousness Day to End Impunity Act of 2022.*”

**SEC. 2.** The State shall ensure that the perpetrators of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances shall be punished so that justice shall be served to the victims and their families.

The State shall intensify its efforts to curb impunity and bring it to an end. The State recognizes that the participation of all sectors concerned shall ensure the success of the fight against impunity. Towards this end, the State shall endeavor to raise awareness of the people regarding this issue.

**SEC. 3.** In memory of the victims of the Maguindanao massacre and as a symbol of the people’s struggle against impunity, the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November of every year is hereby declared as National Consciousness Day to End Impunity.

**SEC. 4.** The implementation of this Act shall be under the Commission of Human Rights (CHR), with the help of the Department of Education and the Department of Interior and Local Government, which shall create programs directed towards educating

the people about human rights issues and the need to uphold these rights. In this regard, civil society organizations shall be tapped to assist the CHR in this endeavor.

**SEC. 5.** This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in at least two (2) newspapers of national circulation.

*Approved,*