

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

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session



HOUSE RESOLUTION No. 124

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**

RESOLUTION
EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO
ECHO THE CALL OF THE COMMITTEE TO PROTECT JOURNALISTS
ON PRESIDENT FERDINAND MARCOS, JR. TO TAKE SEVERAL
CONCRETE STEPS TO PROTECT PRESS FREEDOM IN THE
PHILIPPINES

WHEREAS, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) is an independent, non-profit and non-governmental organization that promotes press freedom worldwide, as well as advocates defense of the rights of journalists, free speech, and transparency in government, among others;

WHEREAS, known as “Journalism’s Red Cross,” the CPJ on 23 May 2022 wrote a letter to then-incoming President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr., “to draw attention and request [his] leadership in reversing [his] predecessor’s abusive acts and policies targeting independent media and journalists and restoring the Philippines’ once-proud standing as a regional bastion of press freedom”;

WHEREAS, the CPJ stressed the importance of reversing the past administration’s In order to undo outgoing President Rodrigo Duterte’s long campaign of intimidation and harassment of the press, CPJ urges you to give top priority to this urgent task. Added the CPJ, “The legitimacy of your administration should be based on independently reported facts that allow for the kind of true public accountability that is the hallmark of strong democracies. The people of the Philippines deserve no less.”

WHEREAS, the CPJ notes several concrete steps that the administration of Marcos, Jr. should take, first of which is the immediate dropping of all trumped-up charges against Nobel Peace laureate Maria Ressa, “a global beacon of press freedom,” as well as her colleagues, and the online news outfit *Rappler*. This appeal means that the government must forthwith dismiss the cyber libel cases against her and Reynaldo Santos, the tax evasion proceeding pending against her, and the revocation of registration proceeding that aims to shut *Rappler* down;

WHEREAS, the CPJ points out that “journalists worldwide and more than 80 organizations that form the Hold the Line Coalition are watching for Ressa’s fate,” and that Marcos, Jr. should no longer emulate his predecessor’s “punitive actions and policies” and thus let *Rappler* “operate freely without fear of reprisal. That includes allowing access to *Rappler* reporter Lian Buan, who reports she was shoved and blocked by [Marcos, Jr.’s] security detail on the campaign trail and ignored by [his] spokesperson when asked questions”;

WHEREAS, the free press advocacy organization also pushes for the restoration of the franchise of ABS-CBN, noting that although the media outfit remains in operation albeit online, “the loss of its operating franchise has decimated its national television audience, forcing the station to significantly downsize operations.” This observation reflects that of millions of Filipinos who bewail the loss of important coverage on vital events and matters such as disasters, and that of at least 11,000 media workers and employees who lost their jobs or were displaced;

WHEREAS, the CPJ also strongly urges the administration of Marcos, Jr. “to cease the ‘red-tagging’ of journalists, the wrongful and dangerous labeling of reporters as supporters of the banned communist insurgency.” This “*de facto* government policy” has been used, and continues to be used, as a tool to intimidate, threaten, and silence journalists, along with human rights defenders, the opposition, activists, and ordinary citizens;

WHEREAS, red-tagging has been well-documented—not only by Philippine human rights monitors but also by international rights watchdogs like United Nations Special Rapporteurs—to lead to trumped-up charges, extrajudicial killings, and attempts on the life and threats to safety of the victims baselessly labeled as rebels, supporters or sympathizers of the armed struggle, or “communist-terrorists.” One of them is Tacloban journalist Frenchiema Cumpio, “who has been languishing behind bars for over two years on an illegal firearm[s] charge” and a similarly fabricated charge of terrorist financing—both of which are actually retaliatory charges filed for her coverage

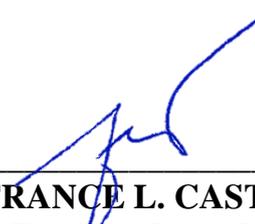
of militarization of civilian communities and human rights abuses committed by the police and military. The CPJ also calls for the dropping of the charges against Cumpio;

WHEREAS, lastly, the CPJ urges the Marcos, Jr. government “to prioritize ending the enduring culture of impunity in the killing of Filipino journalists,” noting that “the Philippines is persistently among the most dangerous places worldwide to be a journalist.” The country was in fact spotlighted as the seventh most perilous for journalists, with 13 unsolved media murders within a span of ten years, according to the CPJ’s 2021 Impunity Index. The CPJ remarks that the Presidential Task Force on Media Security “has made only marginal progress in bringing the killers of journalists to full justice and at one juncture disingenuously declared an end of impunity in [the] country. Under your watch, the task force’s mission should be reaffirmed and its work in solving media killings expedited”;

WHEREAS, Congress must ensure that these concrete steps which the CPJ raises for the immediate attention and action of the Marcos, Jr. government are indeed taken. As the state of press freedom is likewise an indicator of state of democracy as a whole and the general human rights climate of a country, resolving these issues will, in the words of the CPJ, “reassert your country’s [the Philippines’] damaged democratic credentials by forthrightly promoting and protecting press freedom”;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives expressing the sense of the House of Representatives to echo the call of the Committee to Protect Journalists on President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. to take several concrete steps to protect press freedom in the Philippines.

Adopted,



Rep. FRANCE L. CASTRO
ACT Teachers Party-List



Rep. ARLENE D. BROSAS
GABRIELA Women’s Party



Rep. RAOUL DANNIEL A. MANUEL
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