

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

FIFTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 1835



Introduced by Reprs. NERI JAVIER COLMENARES and TEDDY A. CASIÑO

RESOLUTION URGING THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS TO INVESTIGATE, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, THE ASSASSINATION OF ITALIAN PRIEST, FR. FAUSTO "POPS" TENTORIO OF THE PONTIFICAL INSTITUTE FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS (PIME) IN ARAKAN VALLEY, NORTH COTABATO ON OCTOBER 17, 2011 ALLEGEDLY BY AGENTS OF THE MILITARY FROM THE 57TH INFANTRY BATTALION OF THE PHILIPPINE ARMY

WHEREAS, on October 17, 2011 at about 7:30 in the morning Fr. Fausto "Pops" Tentorio, 59 years old, Italian, member of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME), and parish priest of Mother of Perpetual Help Parish in Arakan Valley, North Cotabato Province was shot dead within the compound of the church while he was about to board his Suzuki gray vehicle preparing for a clergy meeting in Kidapawan City;

WHEREAS, a staff of the church who was about to throw some garbage outside said she saw Fr. Pops' body slumped on the ground, unconscious and bloodied. Fr. Pops was immediately brought by other church colleagues to the Antipas Medical Specialist Hospital but was declared dead on arrival (DOA). He sustained multiple gunshot wounds from a 9mm-caliber pistol;

WHEREAS, meanwhile, Arakan Councilor Leonardo Reovoca, a former church worker, noticed a person wearing a helmet running for the main road away from the scene and rode-off in a blue XRM motorcycle with a driver waiting on it. Councilor Reovoca was at that time outside the premises of the Arakan Central Elementary School which was right across the parish. He said some teachers claim they heard three loud gunbursts. He also noticed two (2) army soldiers in full battle gear believed to be members of 5th Special Forces of the Philippine Army (SF-PA) who despite being in the vicinity never responded to the incident. During that day, there was an Oplan Bayanihan activity being conducted by the military inside the said school;

WHEREAS, The Philippine National Police (PNP) in Arakan Station responded at around 8:20 in the morning and based on their initial investigation, Fr. Pops was shot at close range about three feet away from the perpetrator. The PNP also said, they found seven (7) empty shells at the scene and the Italian priest had 8 gunshot wounds in the head and body. The Suzuki vehicle of Fr. Pops was shattered with two (2) bullet holes in the window near the driver's seat. The PNP intimated that the killing of the priest may be related to his anti-mining advocacy;

WHEREAS, weeks before Fr. Pops was gunned down, Fr. Leoncio Lubiano, the head of the parish formation and catechism, said their church compound had been under surveillance. Fish vendors frequented the parish compound in August. On October 14, soldiers from the 57th Infantry Battalion, Philippine Army (IB-PA) were asking for Fr. Pops' mobile phone number from community leaders in Badiangon Village. An unidentified man had been looking for Fr. Pops' whereabouts since January. The dogs were also incessantly barking the night before the incident and Kennedy vehicles were also spotted patrolling the church area;

WHEREAS, Fr. Pops was subjected to a number of harassment incidents and death threats in the past years because of his active pastoral role with the tri-people communities of Lumad, Muslims and Christians. His advocacy on lumads and peasant struggle for land, environment and human rights was reflective on his commitment to serve the disadvantaged and oppressed. In 2007, an undetermined number of military men from the 57th IB-PA raided the compound due to their allegations that there were firearms hidden in the office of the parish. But Fr. Pops denied the allegations and they reported the incident immediately to the police;

WHEREAS, on October 6-7, 2003, Fr. Pops survived a manhunt from a paramilitary group called "Bagani" which was organized by the 73rd IB-PA against the New People's Army, when he went to a remote village in Kitaotao, Bukidnon to conduct missionary work. The leaders of the 'Baganis' were also known to facilitate the encroachment of 'development projects' such as agribusiness monocrop plantations and mining in ancestral domains. This was the first attempt against his life as a foreign missionary;

WHEREAS, Fr. Pops first arrived in the Philippines in 1978 and his first assignment was in Ayala, Archdiocese of Zamboanga City from 1978 to 1980. From 1980 to 1985, he was assigned to the Diocese of Kidapawan and was stationed as Mission Administrator in the Parish of Columbio, Sultan Kudarat serving the Lumads, Muslims and Christian settlers. In 1985, he was transferred to the mission station in Arakan and stayed there until he was killed. He organized the tribal organization called the Tinananon-Kulamanon Lumadnong Panaghiusa or TIKULPA in 2003;

WHEREAS, Fr. Pops is the third Italian PIME priest gunned down in Mindanao but second in the Diocese of Kidapawan;

WHEREAS, the spate of Extrajudicial Killings (EJK) continue under the Aquino Administration and no death squad so far has been dismantled;

WHEREAS, it is important for Congress to investigate the insidious phenomena of EJK all over the country in order to find out if any legislative action may be undertaken to remedy this heinous form of human rights violation;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS to conduct an investigation, in aid of legislation, into the assassination of Italian Priest, Fr. Fausto "Pops" Tentorio of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME) in Arakan Valley, North Cotabato on October 17, 2011 allegedly by agents of the military from the 57th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army.

Approved.



NERI JAVIER COLMENARES
Bayan Muna



TEDDY A. CASIÑO
Bayan Muna