

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 15, 2020

Ambassador Jose Manuel Romualdez
Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines
1600 Bataan St. NW
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Ambassador Jose Manuel Romualdez:

We are writing to express our alarm over the “Anti-terrorism Act of 2020” which was recently approved by the Congress of the Philippines and signed into law by President Duterte. Enactment of this legislation into law sends the wrong message about the Philippine Government’s respect for human rights. We urge you to request President Duterte and the Congress consider repealing this repressive legislation.

As Members of Congress who have heard from organizations and individuals working to improve the Philippines for all its citizens, we share their concerns that human, labor, environmental, and indigenous rights communities as well as political opponents are being routinely targeted in efforts to silence their voices and the communities they are working to support. Those concerns were proven to be well founded recently when the United Nations issued a detailed report on what they identify as serious human rights violations, targeted arrests and killings, and the “vilification of dissent” in the country.

In light of this systemic oppression in the Philippines by the Duterte Administration, we believe that this legislation giving a body hand-picked by the President the authority to classify any organization a “terrorist organization” and have supporters or members of those organizations arrested without a warrant or a criminal charge and be detained for up to 24 days is nothing more than a tool to continue these attacks on civil and human rights groups. With a long track record of using drug laws and martial law in parts of the country to target innocent activists who did nothing other than speak out against government policies, we clearly are left with no option but to view this as just the latest and most egregious effort to silence those fighting for basic and fundamental human rights in the Philippines.

This legislation coupled with the recent silencing of the Rappler, a media outlet, the arrest of journalist Maria Ressa, and documented targeted killings of labor rights and other human rights activists sends a chilling message to your friends and allies that you do not believe in protecting or advancing fundamental human rights. These actions are alarming and appear to be designed as

a way to silence political opponents and those fighting for workers' rights, indigenous communities, environmental activists, farmers and human rights defenders. Again, we urge you to request the Government of the Philippines consider repealing this oppressive and unnecessary legislation and send a message that the human rights of all citizens of the Philippines will be protected.

Sincerely,


JAN SCHAKOWSKY
Member of Congress

COLIN ALLRED
Member of Congress

EARL BLUMENAUER
Member of Congress

SUZANNE BONAMICI
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TONY CÁRDENAS
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JESÚS G. "CHUY" GARCÍA
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