

Human Security Act Will Lead to More Government Sponsored Terrorism

In a rare display of "public duty" members of the House of Representatives mustered a quorum last Monday to pass the Human Security Act of 2007 otherwise known as the anti-terrorism bill. During the plenary discussions, Rep. Simeon Datumanong the Co-Chairman of the Joint Conference Committee of the Senate and House said that the anti-terrorism bill "shall not prejudice respect for human rights which shall be absolute and protected at all times";

But how could Rep. Datumanong, make such a shamefaced assertion when the fact is provisions of the anti-terrorism bill clearly violates the Bill of Rights of our Constitution? How could members of the House who voted for the bill have such guts to claim that they voted so as to fulfill their duty to protect the public against terrorist threats when the truth is their act is tantamount to robbing the people of their fundamental freedoms, and institutionalizes repression and tyranny?

The Bill of Rights of our constitution states that no person shall be held to answer for a criminal offense without due process of the law, but the anti-terror bill allows for the arrest of a person suspected of being a terrorist even without the virtue of a warrant or the preconditions for a warrantless arrest. The bill also violates the right to privacy and the right to be secure in their persons by institutionalizing "terrorist profiling", and surveillance and interception of private communications. The bill also expands the 36 hour detention period to three days which multiplies the risk of torture being committed for suspects under custody.

Even without a special law against terrorism numerous cases of human rights violations have been committed by agents of the state. Our own documentation from January – December 2006 shows that in the course of the Arroyo government's war against terror there have been about 116 individuals who were illegally arrested, and 21 individuals who were tortured while under police or military custody. If such cases could occur even before the anti-terrorism law was legislated; what's to stop the government from abusing its powers now especially since this law obviously provides the legal mantle that legitimizes the state's acts of impunity.

We categorically state that we are against acts that terrorize the people and violate the sanctity of human life. And it is for this reason that we firmly believe that the fight against terror should not be fought at the expense of sacrificing human rights. The government may believe that through the anti-terror bill they are doing their duty of protecting our security and safety, but the question now is who will protect us from the abuses and tyranny of our government.