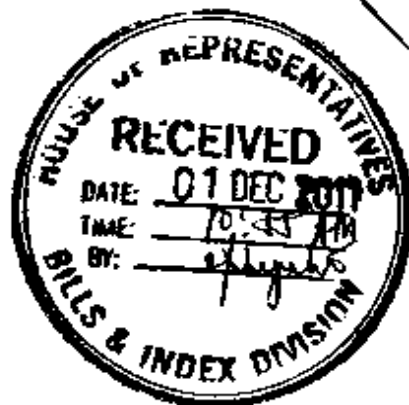


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City



FIFTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL No. **5580**

Introduced by Representatives NERI JAVIER COLMENARES, TEDDY A. CASIÑO,
LUZVIMINDA ILAGAN, and EMMI DE JESUS

**AN ACT MANDATING THE OBSERVANCE OF 29 NOVEMBER OF EVERY YEAR
AS WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS DAY**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Human rights violations have continued to plague the country despite government's commitment to respect and protect human rights through its being a signatory to international covenants. Subsequently, a number of men and women have sprouted from the ranks of human rights group and advocates coming from the different sectors in society to defend and protect human rights in the country.

As stated under the United Nations *Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms* (commonly known as the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders), a human rights defender is anyone working for the promotion and protection of human rights. This broad definition encompasses professional as well as non-professional human rights workers, volunteers, journalists, lawyers and anyone else carrying out, even on an occasional basis, a human rights activity.

Being human rights defenders (HRD), they have been subjected to harassment, vilification, persecution, enforced disappearances and even killings. Under the previous administration, there were 476 HRD victims of extrajudicial killings and 68 HRD victims of enforced disappearances.

Filipino women have been active in the defense and protection of human rights in the country. Their activism is vital as they effectively advance the rights of all people by challenging inequality and repression and empower women to partake in the efforts for national development. As women taking leading roles in human rights promotion, they challenge traditional gender roles in a society that remains to be male-dominated.

As a result, women human rights defenders are sometimes more vulnerable to hostility and reprisals than their male colleagues. Because of their work on women's rights, many of them become targets by government agents, organized crime rings, extremist religious groups, and paramilitary groups and suffer from sexual harassment and abuse while at their hands. Such cases were those of Angie Ipong, Melissa Roxas, and those of *desaparacidos* Sherlyn Cadapan and Karen Empeño. Speaking out against abuses of human rights and women's rights, they often challenge ingrained cultural beliefs and attitudes about the role of women in the society. Because the changing role of women is often highly contested within societies, when women take action to defend their rights, they may be perceived as a threat to social stability and the status quo.

November 29 marks the anniversary of the opening of the First International Consultation on Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs), organised in 2005 by several human rights organisations in Colombo, Sri Lanka, where participants also declared it as the *International Day on Women Human Rights Defenders*. Succeeding years saw the commemoration of various international and national organizations of women worldwide led by the International Coalition of Women Human Rights Defenders, with the support of human rights bodies of the United Nations. In the Philippines, women and human rights organizations commemorate the day by articulating positions on violations on the rights of women human rights defenders for the government to address and resolve.

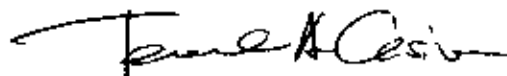
There is a need to inculcate the importance of respecting and defending human rights in the country. This could be achieved through educational activities that focus on human rights, gender and development issues and how everybody could become human rights defenders.. Declaring a National Consciousness Day on Women Human Rights Defenders every 29th of November would aid and facilitate this endeavor.

Thus, the approval of this bill is earnestly sought.

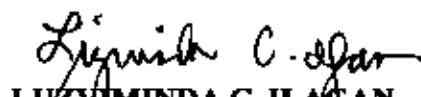
Approved,



NERI JAVIER COLMENARES
Bayan Muna Party-List



TEDDY A. CASINÓ
Bayan Muna Party-List



LUZVIMINDA C. ILAGAN
Gabriela Women's Party



EMMI A. DE JESUS
Gabriela Women's Party

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**AN ACT MANDATING THE OBSERVANCE OF 29 NOVEMBER OF EVERY YEAR
AS WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS DAY**

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 “WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS DAY Act of 2011.”

Section 2. The State shall ensure that the perpetrators of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, vilification, harassments and other forms of human rights violation shall be punished so that justice shall be served to the victims and their families.

The State shall intensify its efforts to respect and protect human rights, especially women’s rights in the country. The State recognizes the participation of all sectors concerned and shall ensure the prevention of further human rights violations. Towards this end, the State shall endeavor to raise awareness of the people regarding this issue.

The State shall respect and protect human rights defenders against any violence, retaliation and intimidation as a consequence of their human rights work.

Section 3. In support of the international campaign to protect human rights defenders especially women’s human rights defenders, and to urge government to address and resolve human rights violations, the 29th of November of every year is hereby declared as National Consciousness Day for the Protection of the Rights of Women Human Rights Defenders.

Section 4. The implementation of this Act shall be under the Commission of Human Rights (CHR), in coordination with the Department of Education, and the Philippine

Commission on Women, which shall create programs directed towards educating the people about human rights and gender issues and the need to uphold these rights. Civil society organizations shall also be tapped to assist the CHR in this endeavor.
monitor and to be aware of the violations against human rights and HRDs.

Section 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,