

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

SIXTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 635



Introduced by CHRISTOPHER S. CO and RODEL M. BATOCABE

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill seeks to declare November 23 as Philippine Press Freedom Day.

Every May 3, the world celebrates World Press Freedom Day, following a recommendation adopted at the twenty-sixth session of UNESCO's General Conference in 1991. This, however, does not have any significance to Philippine press history. This day comes and goes without a fuss in our country.

But on November 23, 2009, Philippine press history changed in an instant as 57 people were killed in one of the most gruesome politically motivated crimes of the decade. Genalyn Mangudadatu and her family, most of them women, joined by 37 journalists, composed a convoy of five cars on the way to the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) to file her husband Ismael Mangudadatu's candidacy. They were met by a hundred armed men, forcefully led into a vacant lot, and were shot at close range, and most of them either abused, raped or mutilated, evidently as part of efforts to prevent them from filing.

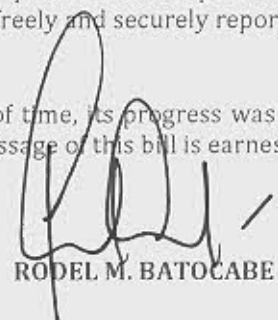
While we are considered to have the freest press in Asia, we are also bombarded with numbers of murdered and disappeared journalists. Remembered as the single deadliest event for journalists in recent history, the Maguindanao massacre is and continues to be a symbol of a fight for press freedom and their rights in the practice of their profession. The commemoration of Philippine Press Freedom Day shall serve as a fitting reminder that we will never forget the sacrifices of these journalists who gave up their lives in the practice of their profession.

Freedom of the press not only includes the right to speak and write but also includes the right to be respected and protected from threats, intimidation and harm to their lives and property while in the pursuit of their profession. It comprises primarily of the safety and security of those who want to spread the truth. Certainly, the Maguindanao massacre is a wanton violation of their rights, and the day that such an abuse of power and machinery happened at the expense of innocent truth seekers must be a day to commemorate and honor their sacrifices to prevent another ignominy in the history of the Philippine press.

Lastly, the Philippine Press Freedom Day seeks to promote and uphold freedom and heighten awareness on press freedom, so that journalists may freely and securely report the truth no matter who gets hurt by it.

The bill was filed in the 15th Congress but for lack of time, its progress was halted at the committee level. In light of all these circumstances, the swift passage of this bill is earnestly sought.


CHRISTOPHER S. CO


RODEL M. BATOCABE

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**AN ACT DECLARING NOVEMBER TWENTY-THREE OF EVERY YEAR AS "PHILIPPINE
PRESS FREEDOM DAY"**

*Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress
assembled:*

SECTION 1. In recognition of the need to establish a comprehensive and structured campaign for the protection of the press, November 23 of every year is hereby declared as the "Philippine Press Freedom Day."

SECTION 2. To ensure meaningful observance of the holiday as herein declared, all heads of government agencies and instrumentalities, including government-owned and controlled corporations as well as local government units, and employers in the private sector shall encourage and afford sufficient time and opportunities for their employees to engage and participate in any activity to be conducted within the premises of their respective offices or establishments to celebrate "Philippine Press Freedom Day."

SECTION 3. The Department of Education, the Commission on Higher Education and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, in coordination with the Presidential Communications Operations Office, other government media organizations, private media organizations, shall lead public and private school communities at all levels in organizing consciousness-raising activities on the importance of the press, their rights, and the elimination of all forms of violence, against the press.

SECTION 4. If, for any reason, any section or provision of this Act is held to be unconstitutional or invalid, the validity of other sections herein shall not be affected thereby.

SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its publication in two national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved.