

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Sixteenth Congress
First Regular Session



House Bill No. 1447

Introduced by **REP. PANGALIAN M. BALINDONG**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The presumption of innocence is one of the most important basic tenets of our criminal justice system. But while a person is presumed innocent until proven guilty, the manner of reporting or writing about certain persons suspected of having committed various crimes, are offensively biased not only to the person himself, but to their culture, nationality or collective image. It contributes to the mindset that the Muslim as a whole, is an undesirable, ethnic group of people. In the minds of many, they are already guilty, until proven innocent.

It may be said that there is already the practice in media of labeling criminal suspects according to their religious or ethnic culture; thus, they are described as "Muslim terrorists, Muslim bandits", etc., which smacks of being highly discriminatory to the entire Muslim people, and not only to the suspected offender. Indeed, our Muslim brothers are a minority among the Filipino majority, but should be treated with the same respect and privilege as any other Batangueno, Visayan or other Filipino citizen.

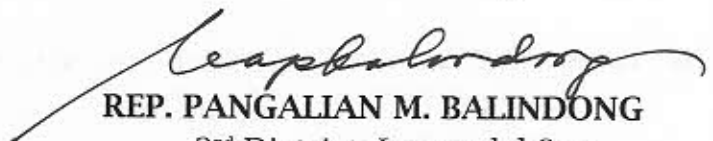
Certainly the whole Filipino nation rose in uproar and protest against the recent definition/branding by some first world countries of a maid as a "Pinay", simply because there are so many Filipina OFWs working as such. Why then is our media doing the same to our Muslim countrymen?

Thus, the use of words "Muslim" or "Islamic" in association with criminals or unlawful offenders who may be of Muslim heritage are offensively biased against the whole Muslim People, especially when used in newspapers or in radio, television and other news outlets which virtually blackmark the entire Muslim community, and is extremely unfair to the Islamic religious culture, to each and every Muslim individual as well as to

their collective image, and to their social personality as respectable citizens of our country.

Only be penalizing such acts and providing penalties therefor to the offender and to the offender's higher authorities of media, such as their editors, could this unwholesome, culturally and religiously biased practice be curbed and discarded. Then and only then, could there be positive social and cultural exchanges of goodwill and understanding among our different races and culture, fanned by the widespread use of information and mass media among all.

The immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



REP. PANGALIAN M. BALINDONG
2nd District, Lanao del Sur

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House Bill No. **1447** _____

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AN ACT
PROHIBITING THE USE OF THE WORDS "MUSLIM" AND
"CHRISTIAN" IN MASS MEDIA TO DESCRIBE ANY PERSON SUSPECTED
OF OR CONVICTED FOR HAVING COMMITTED CRIMINAL OR UNLAWFUL
ACTS, AND PROVIDING PENALTIES THEREOF

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

SECTION 1. *Prohibited Act.* It is hereby declared unlawful for any person to use in mass media, the words "Muslim" and/or "Christian" or any other word that would denote religious, regional or ethnic affiliation to describe any person suspected of or convicted for having committed criminal or unlawful acts.

SECTION 2. *Penalties.* The penalty of arresto mayor or a fine ranging from Five thousand pesos (P5,000.00) to Ten thousand pesos (P10,000.00), or both, at the discretion of the courts, shall be imposed upon any person found guilty of violating Section 1 hereof.

The editor-in-chief, in the case of print media, and the news editor in the case of broadcast media and other forms of mass media, shall be imposed a fine not lower than Fifty thousand pesos (P50,000.00).

The juridical entity violating this Act shall be imposed a fine not lower than Fifty Thousand Pesos (P50,000.00) for every violation.

For the second and succeeding offenses, the penalties shall be doubled.

SECTION 3. *Implementing Rules.* The Philippine Information Agency, in coordination with the concerned sectors and entities, shall promulgate the rules and regulations to implement this Act within three months after its effectivity.

SECTION 4. *Repealing Clause.* All laws, orders, issuances, rules and regulations or parts thereof inconsistent with provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, modified or amended accordingly.

Approved,