

Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City

Sixteenth Congress
Third Regular Session

House Bill No. 5969



Introduced by 1-BAP Party-list Representative Silvestre H. Bello III

EXPLANATORY NOTE

"Philippine Troops Capture Muslim Linked to Bombing".

"Clash With Muslim Rebels Leave Scores Dead, Wounded".

"Manila Police Chase Muslim-Speaking Suspects in Shooting".

"Muslim-looking Guy is Last Seen in Area Before Robbery Incident".

These are usual headlines or subtitles in Philippine daily newspapers, whether broadsheets or tabloid, and are also heard from radio or television reporters, in flash reports and news bars.

This has become so commonplace that people have gotten used to it. In fact, a day rarely passes by when we don't hear a "Muslim Suspect" being reported in the tri-media.

For a few months in the recent past, the word "Muslim" came into daily news and gained much unwarranted notoriety when it was

reported that 44 police commandos were killed by "Muslim rebels" in the infamous Mamasapano incident.

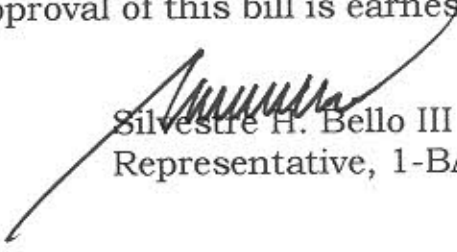
A "MUSLIM" relates to a person who follows the religion of Islam, a monotheistic and Abrahamic religion based on the Quran.

For a fifth of the world's population, Islam is both a religion and a complete way of life. Muslims follow a religion of peace, mercy, and forgiveness, and the great majority have nothing to do with the extremely grave and violent events which have come to be associated with their faith.

But the continuing and irresponsible use of the word "Muslim" in media, usually on unpalatable terms, has led to the further marginalization and ostracization of our brothers and sisters of the Islam faith, has made "Muslim" synonymous with radicalism or lawlessness, and unnecessarily depicts our Muslim brethren as trouble makers in general, largely to be avoided and shunned due to their perceived violent tendencies.

This Bill seeks to curtail the apparent media bias against Muslim outlaws, malefactors and criminal elements, but which does not use such inflammatory language for outlaws and malefactors belonging to other faiths or sects.

Strong support for the approval of this bill is earnestly sought.



Silvestre H. Bello III
Representative, 1-BAP Party-list

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AN ACT PROHIBITING THE USE, IN PHILIPPINE TRI-MEDIA POLICE BLOTTERS, AND OTHER GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE AGENCIES, OF THE WORD "MUSLIM" TO DESCRIBE ANY PERSON SUSPECTED OF COMMITTING ANY FELONY WHEN REPORTING SUCH FELONY.

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

SECTION 1. Title. This shall be known as "An Act Prohibiting the Use, in Philippine Tri-Media, Police Blotters, and Other Government Agencies, of the Word "Muslim" to Describe Any Person Suspected of Committing Any Felony When Reporting Such Felony."

SECTION 2. It shall be unlawful for any media reporter, writer, media outlet, police blotter, government agencies, private or public hospitals or such other institutions to use the word "Muslim" to

describe any person suspected of committing any unlawful act or of the commission of a crime, when reporting such unlawful or criminal act.

SECTION 3. Nature and Scope of Prohibition – Unless the criminal act was expressly performed by the malefactor for religious purposes or with religious underpinnings, or purposely done to draw attention to his being a Muslim, our discerning media should fairly report the malefactor for what he did, rather than for who he is.

This prohibition applies to all government and private institutions, law enforcement agencies, hospitals required under PD 169 to report all persons being treated for physical injuries resulting from any form of violence, and media practitioners whether practicing independently or connected to private or government media establishments.

SECTION 4. Penalties. Upon finding of guilt, violators of this Act shall suffer the following penalties:

- A. 1st Offense – A fine of not less than 500 pesos nor more than 1,000 pesos.
- B. 2nd Offense – A fine of not less than 1,000 pesos nor more than 3,000 pesos.
- C. 3rd Offense - Suspension of the government license, permit or accreditation of the concerned media outfit or establishment for a period of not less than 6 months nor more than 12 months.

D. 4th Offense – Revocation of the government permit to operate and or prohibition to engage as a media practitioner.

SECTION 5. Solidary liability. – Media practitioners guilty of violating this Act shall be solidarily liable with their editors in chief and publisher.

SECTION 6. Repealing Clause. All laws, decrees, executive issuances, rules and regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 7. Separability clause. The declaration of unconstitutionality of any provision of this Act shall not affect the other provisions hereof.

SECTION 8. Effectivity. This Act shall take effect after fifteen (15) days following its publication in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved.