

Republic of the Philippines  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
Quezon City

**SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS**  
First Regular Session

**HOUSE BILL NO. 5451**



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Introduced by **BAYAN MUNA** Representative **CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE**

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**AN ACT**  
**DECLARING SEPTEMBER 21 OF EVERY YEAR AS A "NATIONAL DAY OF**  
**REMEMBRANCE" IN MEMORY OF THE STRUGGLES AND SACRIFICES OF**  
**THE HEROES AND MARTYRS OF THE MARTIAL LAW ERA**

**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

Almost forty-five years since the declaration of Martial Law by former President Ferdinand Marcos in 1972, tens of thousands of Filipinos trooped to the streets to protest the sneak burial of the remains of the Dictator in the Libingan ng mga Bayani. Among the protesters are members of the youth sector, popularly called the "millennials". Though they were not yet born during the darkest years of martial law, these millennials in their own creative way expressed their opposition to the attempts of the administration to revise the country's history and make a hero out of the ousted fascist and dictator President.

In 2016, a video uploaded by Martial Law human rights victims' organization Samahan ng mga Ex Detainees laban sa Detensyon at Aresto (SELDA) showed that many millennials are clueless about the horrors of Martial Law. It would take the narration of experience of the human rights victims themselves for these millennials to understand and feel the terror that was unleashed during that time.

These recent events would show how the dark period of Martial Law era can be forgotten, or revised by the powers that be.

It should not be forgotten that the declaration of Martial Law on September 21, 1972 by former President Marcos ushered in a period unparalleled in post-war Philippine history. The suppression of democratic rights and civil liberties, the unbroken pattern of gross human rights violations and the systematic plunder of the nation's treasury were its terrible legacy, the effects of which our nation still has to recover from until today.

Compared to the other military dictatorships of the 1970s and 1980s, the Marcos regime was exceptional by any standard for both the quantity and quality of its violence. While the Marcos' regime's tally of 3,257 extrajudicial killings may be far lower than Argentina's 8,000 missing, this exceeds the 2,115 extrajudicial deaths under General Augusto Pinochet in Chile and the 266 dead under the Brazilian junta.

Under the authoritarian rule of Marcos, human rights violations were the apex of a pyramid of terror – 3,257 killed, 35,000 tortured and 70,000 incarcerated. In striking contrast to Argentina, only 737 Filipinos “disappeared” between 1975 and 1985. However, nearly four times that number – 2,250 – or 77 percent of all victims were salvaged. Many were tortured, mutilated and dumped on a roadside for public display to create widespread fear.

There is a need to remind the Filipinos, especially the young generation and future generation, of this part of the nation’s history so that they may learn to stand up and fight for democracy and rights as what the survivors of Martial law have done.

This bill is essentially about remembrance and celebration – the remembrance of a dark era that brought shame and infamy to the nation, and the celebration of the courage and conviction of those who refused to submit to tyranny and paid the ultimate sacrifice so that we may live in relative freedom today.

In establishing a national day of remembrance and celebration, this bill hopes to impart the lessons of martial law so the present generations and those yet to come shall never forget what should never be repeated. The underlying objective is to teach the youth about the difference between dictatorship and democracy, between oppression and freedom, between right and wrong.

This bill further seeks to underscore the continuing struggle for justice of the victims of human rights violations during the Marcos Dictatorship. The author hope that by taking the necessary steps toward redressing these gross violations, the long-overdue process for remembering, for recording and for atoning can be established so that the nation can come to terms with the past.

In view of the foregoing, immediate approval of this measure is earnestly sought.

*Approved,*

  
Rep. CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE  
*Bayan Muna Party-List*

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*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 "National Day of Remembrance Act" in memory of the Filipino heroes and martyrs who stood up to the tyranny of the martial law regime under President Ferdinand E. Marcos from September 21, 1972 to February 25, 1986 and whose struggles and sacrifices have enabled us to live in freedom today.

**SECTION 2.** In order to recognize the struggles and sacrifices of the heroes and martyrs of the martial law era, foster deep respect for civil liberties and democratic institutions, instill awareness about the difference between dictatorship and democracy, between oppression and freedom, between right and wrong, and to impart the lessons of martial law so the present generations and those yet to come shall never forget what should never be repeated, September 21 of every year is hereby declared as a special working holiday to be known as the "National Day of Remembrance."

**SECTION 3.** Government offices, schools, and other agencies and establishments in both the public and private sectors shall celebrate this observance with appropriate activities, ceremonies and programs that demonstrate the national commitment to democracy, freedom, human rights and justice and that pay due homage to the heroes and martyrs of the martial law era.

The Commission on Human Rights, Department of Education, National Historical Institute, Philippine Information Agency, the premier state schools and universities, and the other appropriate agencies of the government, shall take the lead in establishing multifarious prominent activities and productions across the country in this regard.

**SECTION 4.** To ensure the meaningful observance of the holiday as herein declared, all heads of government and private facilities, offices and instrumentalities shall encourage and afford sufficient time and opportunities for their employees, personnel or students to engage and participate in any activity to mark the "National Day of Remembrance."

**SECTION 5.** Symbolic reparation through the erection of memorials, monuments and tombstones, and renaming of public places named after the dictator Ferdinand Marcos and his family shall be undertaken.

**SECTION 6.** The funds necessary for the implementation of this Act shall be included in the budgets of the Commission on Human Rights and Department of Education under the General Appropriations Act of the year following the enactment of this Act.

**SECTION 7.** This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

*Approved,*