



Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
3rd Regular Session

House Bill No. 8098



Introduced by: Rep. Erico Aristotle C. Aumentado

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The bilateral relations between the Republic of the Philippines and the State of Israel is deeply rooted in a sentimental history. In the late 1930s, President Manuel L. Quezon authorized the admission of up to one thousand three hundred (1,300) Jewish refugees being persecuted in the Nazi regime, in what was known as the Open Door Policy. It is notable however, that while President Quezon was the one who let them in, it was the Filipino people who made them feel welcome and treated them as their own kind. The Israelis who were violently and inhumanely treated during the Holocaust were provided new homes in the Philippines where they were respected and accepted by the community. They were treated with such compassion and kindness that some even permanently relocated in the country. It was a great moral victory, not only for the Israelis who were saved, but also for the Filipinos who emerged as real life heroes.

On November 29, 1947, thirty three (33) countries voted in favor of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181, to create the State of Israel. These countries are Australia, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Byelorussian SSR, Canada, Costa Rica, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, France, Guatemala, Haiti, Iceland, Liberia, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Sweden, South Africa, Ukrainian SSR, United States of America, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Uruguay, and

Venezuela. Among this thirty-three, the Philippines was the ONLY Asian country who casted a favorable vote on the creation of the State of Israel.

These events became the foundation of a deep historical, cultural, and moral connection between the two countries which later on led to a long lasting and persisting friendship. On February 26, 1958, the said foundation was further reinforced when the Republic of the Philippines and the State of Israel signed the Treaty of Friendship, formally establishing their bilateral relations, which led to the opening of an Israeli Embassy in Manila and a Filipino Embassy in Tel Aviv in 1962. In 1997, the two countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which formalized a bilateral political dialogue between the countries' foreign ministries.

Until the present, the Israelis and the government of Israel have been paying tribute to the moral courage that the Philippines and the Filipinos have displayed towards their country and their people. When typhoon Haiyan (locally know as Yolanda) struck the Philippines, and left thousands of Filipinos dead, injured, and homeless, the State of Israel mobilized medical professionals, set up field hospitals, donated medicine and provided relief goods to those who were affected. Apart from this generosity, in the same way that the Philippines has opened its doors to the Israelis at the time where they needed it the most, Israel has given visa-free access to Filipino tourists. It seems that repaying one's *utang na loob* (debts of gratitude), is another value commonly shared by the Filipinos and the Israelis.

Most significantly, the State of Israel built an Open Doors Monument in Lezion Memorial Park just off Tel Aviv in 2009 to thank President Manuel L. Quezon and the Filipino people for the Open Doors Policy which gave Israeli refugees not only new homes but also the opportunity to lead new lives.

The Israelis have not forgotten our acts of gallantry and kindness. It is only right that we do not too. This is a fragment of history where humanity prevailed, and the Filipinos were at the center of it. Memories of the past must always be remembered, for it will guide us in the present to be a better nation, and to be better people.

The year 2018, marks the 60th Anniversary of the Treaty of Friendship signed by and between the Philippines and the State of Israel. The year 2018 also marks Israel's 70th anniversary as a State. On February 26, 2018, the Philippines and Israel celebrated their friendship in a "day of jubilation" at the historical Luneta Park in the Philippines. To formally and officially mark this significant occasion, there is a need to declare February 26 a national holiday to commemorate the Treaty of Friendship signed by the two countries. More significantly, it is also an opportunity to commemorate President Manuel L. Quezon's Open Door Policy, which should be considered as one of the Philippine's greatest moral victory as a country and a showing of the strength of Filipino's moral courage.

Hence considering the foregoing, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



ERICO ARISTOTLE C. AUMENTADO



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**AN ACT
DECLARING FEBRUARY 26 OF THE YEAR
AS PHILIPPINE ISRAELI FRIENDSHIP DAY**

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

SECTION 1. Declaration of Policy. – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to:

1. Strengthen the relationship between the Philippines and countries with which it has shared history, values and traditions.
2. Commemorate notable acts of bravery and compassion by the Filipino people and the Philippine government to remind the Filipinos of today of our values as a nation.

SECTION 2. Philippine Israeli Friendship Day. – On February 26, 1958, a Treaty of Friendship was signed by and between the Republic of the Philippines and the State of Israel, establishing their full diplomatic relations. To mark this significant occasion, there is a need to declare said day a national holiday to commemorate both countries' mutual desire to strengthen their bond of peace and tie of friendship.

The Twenty Sixth (26th) of February each year is hereby declared as Philippine Israeli Friendship Day to commemorate the Treaty of Friendship signed by and between the Philippines and Israel. It is hereby declared as a national special working holiday.

SECTION 3. Implementation.— The National Historical Institute (NHI) shall be responsible for the implementation of this Act. For this purpose, it shall formulate and issue the implementing rules and regulations necessary for the proper implementation of this Act.

SECTION 4. Separability Clause. — If any section or provision of this Act is held unconstitutional or invalid, the other sections or provisions not affected thereby shall remain valid and effective.

SECTION 5. Repealing Clause. — All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations, or any part thereof, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 6. Effectivity. - This law shall take effect within fifteen (15) days from publication in the Official Gazette or two (2) newspaper of general circulation.