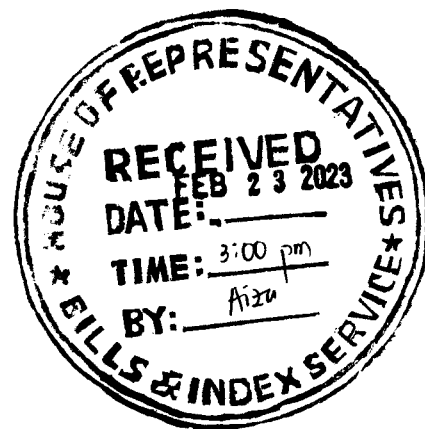


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

19th Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 7306



Introduced by Rep. MARIA VANESSA C. AUMENTADO

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Filipinos and Israelis share common democratic values, freedom and civil rights which are manifested in the span of more than 60 years of Philippine and Israeli bilateral relation. In 1957, the State of Israel and the Republic of the Philippines established full diplomatic relations with the signing of the Treaty of Friendship on February 26, 1958. Consequently, the Israeli embassy in Manila and the Philippine embassy in Tel Aviv both opened in 1962.

The Philippines played a pivotal role in 2 significant events in Israel history – the rescue of more than a thousand Jews from Nazi Germany and the Philippines' vote for the creation of the State of Israel in 1947.

It should be remembered that in the late 1930's, the Philippine Commonwealth Government under then President Manuel L. Quezon officially offered safe haven and issued 10,000 visas to Jewish refugees. By then, while most nations of the world shut their doors for Jews, the Philippines, through Quezon's "Open Door Policy" unconditionally received up to one thousand three hundred (1,300) Jewish refugees and settled them in government-provided housing communities in Marikina. The Israelis who were violently and inhumanely treated during the Holocaust were provided new homes in the Philippines and were treated with much compassion and kindness. Additional plans were made to increase the visa allocation for Jews to 100,000 and to allow more refugees to resettle in the country, but could not be carried out due to the Japanese invasion of the Philippines in December 1941.

Significantly, on November 29, 1947, the Philippines voted for the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181 recommending partition of Palestine and the establishment of a Jewish State. The Philippines was among the 33 countries who supported the creation of the State of Israel; the only Asian country who voted for the said UN Resolution.

The afore mentioned events became the foundation of a deep historical, cultural and moral connection between two countries which later on led to a long-lasting friendship. To reinforce the February 26, 1958 Treaty of Friendship, the two countries signed in 1997 a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), institutionalizing the bilateral political dialogue between the respective foreign ministers. The political dialogue was accompanied by, among others, cooperation in trade and economy, cultural, technical assistance, science, academic exchanges, and tourism.

Up to this day, the Philippines continue to reap the benefits of helping the Jews, with Filipino tourists being given visa-free entry to Israel for 90 days since 1969. An important gesture of reciprocity is when typhoon Haiyan (locally known as “*Yolanda*”), struck the Philippines and left thousands of Filipinos dead, injured and homeless, the State of Israel immediately mobilized medical professionals, set up field hospitals, donated medicine and provided relief goods to those who were affected. Presently, the government of Israel and the Israelis have been paying constant tribute to the moral courage displayed by the Philippines and the Filipino people towards them in their most trying times.

Apparently, another value commonly shared by the Filipinos and the Israelis is the repaying of one’s debts of gratitude (*utang na loob*). As a matter of fact, in 2009, the State of Israel built an Open Doors Monument in Lezion Memorial Park just off the city of Tel Aviv. Accordingly, the gesture was made in grateful appreciation to the late Philippine President Manuel L. Quezon and the Filipino people for the Open Doors Policy which gave Israeli refugees not only new homes but also opportunity to lead new lives.

On February 26, 2018, marked the 60th anniversary of the “Treaty of Friendship”, to which, Philippines and Israel celebrated their friendship in a “day of jubilation” at the historical Luneta Park. 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 two countries. More importantly, 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 victories as a country and a showing of strength of Filipino moral courage. 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.

Indeed, the Israelis have not forgotten our acts of gallantry and kindness, it is but right that we do also. 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.

In view of the foregoing, the passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



MARIA VANESSA C. AUMENTADO

Representative
Bohol, Second [2nd] District

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

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HOUSE BILL NO. 7306

Introduced by Rep. MARIA VANESSA C. AUMENTADO

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

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

SECTION 1. 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 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) day of February every 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. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved.