

Republic of the Philippines  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
Batasan Hills, Quezon City

**NINETEENTH CONGRESS**  
First Regular Session



**HOUSE RESOLUTION No. 939**

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Introduced by  
**ACT Teachers Party-List Rep. FRANCE L. CASTRO,**  
**GABRIELA Women's Party Rep. ARLENE D. BROSAS,**  
and **KABATAAN Party-List Rep. RAOUL DANNIEL A. MANUEL**

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**RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS, IN AID OF  
LEGISLATION, TO INVESTIGATE THE GRAVE VIOLATIONS OF  
INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW ALLEGEDLY COMMITTED BY THE  
ARMED FORCES OF THE PHILIPPINES AGAINST BENITO TIAMZON, WILMA  
TIAMZON, AND THEIR EIGHT COMPANIONS**

**WHEREAS**, on August 22, 2022, the 8th Infantry Division of the Philippine Army reported that Benito Tiamzon, 71, and Wilma Austria-Tiamzon, 70, the Chairman and the Secretary General of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), respectively, were killed in a boat explosion in the waters off Catbalogan City. The boat carrying what the Philippine Army calls “fugitives” and “terrorists” exploded mid-sea as it was being pursued by government troops. The search and retrieval operation was called off the following day, allegedly due to bad weather;

**WHEREAS**, however, the CPP in a recent statement said that contrary to this report, the Tiamzons and their eight companions were brutally tortured and killed by the Armed Forces of the Philippines after their capture in Samar Province earlier that month. The CPP related that the 10 were traveling in separate vehicles, unarmed, when they were taken captive. “Internal reports cited witnesses who saw how the faces and bodies of the victims were smashed, apparently beaten with hard objects.” It added, “the bodies of the Tiamzons and their group were dumped on a motorboat filled with explosives, and tugged from Catbalogan midway towards Taranganan island before it was detonated”;

**WHEREAS**, in separate statements, the National Union of Peoples’ Lawyers (NUPL) and the Public Interest Law Center (PILC) called for accountability for the deaths of the “Catbalogan 10,” saying, “The reported manner of killings, signs of torture on the unarmed victims’ bodies

and the insidious cover-up involving the explosion and sinking of a ‘hostile boat’ in the waters of Catbalogan City...all point to the commission of war crimes by the military...These grave breaches of international humanitarian law expose the injustice of the current counterterrorism framework, which blurs the distinction between armed conflict and terrorism, enables the arbitrary terrorist designation of parties to the protracted armed struggle, and enfeebles the application of protective legal norms to hors de combat, prisoners of war, and protected persons”;

**WHEREAS**, the Commission on Human Rights also committed to investigate the killing of the Catbalogan 10, with Commissioner Beda Eprez saying that “while the regularity of military operations [is] generally presumed, [the] allegation of torture and intentional killing...perpetrated by the military resulting in the death of the Tiamzon couple, alongside other communist rebels, prompts the CHR to fulfill its constitutional mandate to investigate the truth behind the incident”;

**WHEREAS**, the Tiamzon couple and their companions were protected persons under international humanitarian law, which Republic Act 9851 or the Philippine Act on Crimes Against International Humanitarian Law, Genocide, and Other Crimes Against Humanity defines as prisoners of war or persons deprived of liberty for reasons related to an armed conflict, or civilians or hors de combat or persons not taking a direct part or no longer taking part in the hostilities in the power of the adverse party—all of whom must never be made objects of whatever military action, including military attacks, torture, and intentional killing. The alleged brutal treatment they suffered at the hands of their captors and the massacre of their group, which was comprised of unarmed persons, are clear violations of the Geneva Conventions and the domestic laws on IHL;"

**WHEREAS**, the Tiamzons were peace consultants of the National Democratic Front workers who participated in the 2016 to 2017 peace talks. Their contributions to this round of negotiations were vital, as they were among those who pushed for the resumption of the talks in 2016, the drafting and finalization of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms in 2017, and drafting of an Interim Peace Agreement in 2018, among others. As Member of the Negotiating Panel for the NDFP and consultant, respectively, they served as resource persons for the media and in various activities of peace advocates and supporters of the peace talks. They were also veteran activists since the anti-dictatorship movement during the 1970s and 1980s;

**WHEREAS**, the murder of the Tiamzons and their companions were committed in the wake of war crimes committed by the Armed Forces of the Philippines and other state agents in the course of counterinsurgency operations. Among these were the murders of CPP revolutionaries and peace consultants who were captured and killed outside of combat by state forces: Jorge Madlos, Julius Giron, Menardo Villanueva, Eugenia Magpantay, Agaton Topacio, Alvin Luque, and Ericson Acosta, to name a few. Such acts are then covered up by concocted stories about the victims being killed in armed encounters, which are subsequently belied by eyewitness accounts;

**WHEREAS**, the government's resort to brutality to suppress revolutionaries like the Tiamzons is not a solution to the underlying issues that give rise to armed conflict. These issues include poverty, injustice, lack of sovereignty and independence, and a lack of genuine democracy. Resorting to terrorist tagging, fascistic acts, and military means will not resolve these socio-economic and political causes, which can only be addressed through genuine agrarian reform, national industrialization, securing true independence, and the existence of real democracy. The state's reliance on force cannot secure a lasting peace; alternative avenues must be pursued, such as the resumption of the peace process;

**WHEREAS**, Congress must fulfill its mandate in ensuring that the Philippine Constitution, domestic laws, and international laws on the dignity of every person and on the humane conduct of war are followed by all parties to the letter and spirit. It must also probe into the acts committed by the parties, including the Armed Forces of the Philippines, in the conduct of war, such as the circumstances of the detention and murders of the Tiamzons and their companions, to the end that stronger protection for civilians and hors de combat are laid in place.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Committee on Human Rights be directed to investigate, in aid of legislation, the grave violations of international humanitarian law allegedly committed by the Armed Forces of the Philippines against Benito Tiamzon, Wilma Tiamzon, and their eight companions.

*Adopted,*



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**Rep. FRANCE L. CASTRO**  
*ACT Teachers Party-List*



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