



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

20<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS  
1st Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **3485**



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Introduced by Representative SITTIE SHAHARA "BAI DIMPLE" I. MASTURA

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### AN ACT

**MANDATING THE ALLOTMENT OF A PRAYER ROOM FOR MUSLIMS IN EVERY GOVERNMENT BUILDING, MILITARY CAMP, HOTEL, HOSPITAL, MALL, FACTORY, AND OTHER BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS, PUBLIC OR PRIVATE, PROVIDING PENALTIES THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

### EXPLANATORY NOTE

Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; including freedom to change their religion or belief, and freedom – either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest their religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

The UDHR was adopted by the United Nations in 1948 and because of its consequent achievements, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights were ratified in 1976. The UDHR and the two (2) covenants comprise the International Bill of Human Rights.

Consistent with international law, the 1987 Philippine Constitution, in Section 5, Article III provides that no law shall be made respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, and that the free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference, shall forever be allowed.

Christianity accounts for almost 90% of the religious landscape in the Philippines, followed by Islam with 6%. Due to the predominance of Christianity, many establishments and buildings, hospitals and even malls, be it government-owned, private or for the benefit of the public, have chapels or areas reserved for worship and prayers that cater to their faithful.

Muslim Filipinos in real numbers range anywhere from 6.1 million to as high as 6.5 million and are without doubt present in almost all provinces of the country. Islamic worship is woven into the daily life of a Muslim, required to pray five (5) times a day to maintain our spiritual connection with Allah, the Most Merciful as we remind ourselves of our ultimate purpose in life.

The five (5) daily prayers namely: "**Fajr**" or morning prayer which starts at dawn and ends at sunrise; "**Dhuhr**", the midday or afternoon prayer; "**Asr**" or the late afternoon prayer and ends just before sunset; "**Maghrib**", the sunset prayer which starts just after sunset and ends when twilight has disappeared; and "**Isha**" or the night prayer which starts from the disappearance of twilight and ends just before midnight.

This call to prayer or "**Salah**" is one of the most important obligations of the Islamic faith and must be done in a designated prayer room, where the faithful can seek guidance, forgiveness and demonstrate their faithfulness.

In any religion, prayer is one of the highest forms of worship and for the Islamic faithful this call to prayer must be complied with wherever we may be.

This bill therefore seeks to mandate the establishment of at least one (1) prayer room in every government building, hospital, military camp, and when applicable, even in privately-owned establishments such as malls, factories, hospitals and hotels.

This measure when enacted will greatly ease the burden our Muslim brothers and sisters are confronted with when there are no permanent prayer rooms available where they are called to prayers.

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



**SITTIE SHAHARA "BAI DIMPLE" I. MASTURA**

*Representative*

Maguindanao del Norte, Lone District



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

**SECTION 1.** There shall be allotted at least one (1) place of worship or prayer room for Muslims in every government building, military camp, hotel, hospital, mall, factory and other business establishments, institutions, public or private.

**SEC. 2.** Within sixty (60) days upon approval of this Act, the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF), in consultation with the Civil Service Commission (CSC), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department of National Defense (DND), and a representative from the business sector, shall formulate the necessary rules and regulations to implement this Act.

**SEC. 3** All laws, rules and regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

**SEC. 4** This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,