IMPLICATIONS OF ANTI TERROR LAW TO EDUCATION

by:

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The “Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020” that broke the news headlines a couple of weeks ago, is not a newly formulated bill but was in fact a repealing of the R.A. 9372 or otherwise known as the “Human Security Act of 2007” which aims to protect the life and liberty of the public against terror and violence (Official Gazette).

Although there is essentially not much to be discussed regarding the initial purpose of the bill, the refinement and the construction of it is far from desirable. The context and the praising of the bill were so bad that numerous law experts and academic institution labeled the law “seriously flawed” and “haphazardly constructed” (Janvic Mateo, 2020). The way that the bill was constructed lives undesirable loopholes and loose ends that can be manipulated to arrest/accuse innocent people with the act of terrorism.

But what does the bill implicate for the educational sector? The impact of this act will greatly be towards the tertiary level and beyond. In the Philippines were voluntary activism is a huge part of University and College culture, it is highly apparent that it will definitely cause ruckus within the community. Students from the Universities and other Higher Education providers are very expressive of their political and social opinions. It is a trait that was engraved in their ethics which roots from the desire to speak up in order to bring about change.

University of the Philippines Diliman executive committee expressed their disagreement towards the act. They believe that the act will act as a nullifier of social and political rights of people. The act threatens the basic humanity rights from the constitution including the freedom of expression and association, presumption of innocence until
proven guilty, due process of law and privacy of communications and correspondence (Janvic Mateo, 2020). The UP Manila also expressed their apprehension towards the act, stating that it can be used to “legitimize repression, institutionalize and intensify human rights violations”. Following the incident of a violent dispersal of student protesters during a peaceful gathering within the UP campus grounds, June of this year, the concerns regarding this bill only grew exponentially.

Not only is the act poorly constructed and thought after, the timing of its revival and the speed as to how it flew by the due process also attracted suspicion. But mostly, people are outraged due the fact that the Philippine government and its legislative force decided to spring this act into motion during a worldwide pandemic when the efforts and focus should be towards relief and assistance operation for our country men who were experiencing hardship. Due to the pandemic many Filipinos were displaced, lost their jobs, are going hungry, and are not able to access the help they so badly needed. It is insulting, to put it lightly.

It is not totally appalling to formulate legislation which aims to protect the Filipinos against terrorism, since it is common knowledge that there groups that are operating in certain areas in the country that spread terror and fear through violence. But such law must be carefully constructed and formulated. The law is for the people, it must not be used opposed to the innocent.
References:

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