

On the Philippine Position on the East Timor Atrocities

The Philippines voted against an international inquiry into atrocities in East Timor amid reports that Indonesian troops had massacred hundreds of people including church workers, nuns, and priests in the island.

The report said that in an emergency session of the 53 members of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, 32 voted in favor and 12 against, with 6 abstaining on the inquiry. The Philippines was one of those who voted against said inquiry.

The Commission on Human Rights, as a constitutional body mandated to protect and promote human rights is gravely concerned with the vote of the Philippines on the issue. The acts which Indonesian troops and Indonesian supported-militia have committed and are still committing gross violations of human rights, which amount to genocide. The Philippines is a party to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

Under said Convention, genocide includes those that involve 1) killing, maiming, physical or mental harm; 2) creation of deleterious living conditions; 3) imposing birth control; 4) forcibly removing their children from their families.

It is the position of the Commission on Human Rights that the Philippines must seriously consider its position on the atrocities in East Timor if only to show its sincerity in its national policy on the protection of human rights as provided for in the Philippine Constitution. While it is true that the ASEAN members follow a policy of non-interference among its members, the matter of human rights violation is more vital and fundamental, as it is one of the basic objectives of the United Nations Charter.