

On International Terrorism and Biological Warfare

The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. on September 11, 2001 as well as the commission of international crimes in several parts of the world has become a major policy consideration for the Philippine government. The United States and its allies have embarked on a military solution, attacking Afghanistan with sophisticated warfare, causing the death of civilians and the destruction of non-military targets as a means of retaliation for the attacks as well as a strategy in combating terrorism. These developments raised much concern among peace loving people the world over. More violent and destructive measures have been resorted to meet the threat of terrorism. There is fear everywhere that military measures may be applied to other countries.

Terrorists are ideologically motivated, believing in the justice of their cause. Many of them are well financed and have a mass base in many countries, with the network of unidentified supporters. Certainly, terrorism is not an ordinary crime and its perpetrators are not ordinary criminals. The threat they pose to world peace has become more serious and widespread with the use chemical warfare. Already, anthrax sent through mail has injured and killed innocent civilians. Introduction of gasoline in the reservoir of Basilan was reported. Unscrupulous criminals may commit similar acts of terrorism. Such acts are crimes against humanity, which all peace loving nations should cooperate in its eradication. Current laws may not suffice to meet the threat.

The Commission on Human Rights, as a national institution for the promotion and protection of human rights, supports the international efforts of counter-terrorism, as mandated in United Nations Resolutions. Specifically, it favors the adoption of all measures for strictly monitoring the movement of funds from terrorist organizations of identifying suspected terrorists that stage attacks and restricting the movement of suspected terrorists.

All these acts of counter-terrorism, however, should be consistent with the respect for human rights, especially of the innocent individuals. Specifically, these measures should conform with all international instruments on human rights and respect the dignity of every human person.

We urge the Philippine Senate to immediately ratify the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court. The said Court has jurisdiction to try all crimes against humanity including international terrorism, as a peaceful solution to the problem. This development thus behooves the Commission to take the stand that the case of international terrorism linked to Osama Bin Laden and the Al-Qaeda be submitted to the International Criminal Court for its peaceful resolution.

Quezon City, 24 October 2001