



DAKATEO STATEMENT AGAINST THE ANTI-TERRORISM BILL

I solemnly urge you: proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching (2 Tim 4:2).

The *Damdaming Katoliko sa Teolohiya* (DaKaTeo), the Catholic Theological Society of the Philippines, strongly opposes “The Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020” which seeks to amend and reinforce the “Human Security Act of 2007” for it contains provisions inimical and detrimental to the dignity of the human person, all of whom God created in God’s image, redeemed irrevocably through Jesus and brought to new life in the Spirit.

The bill's definition of terrorism and involvement in terrorism including activities such as "training" and "inciting" is very broad. Moreover, the bill does not have adequate safeguards for possible abuses of human rights. It seeks to permit surveillance activities in various forms, detention without a warrant of arrest for up to 24 days, and the freezing of assets. It also proposes the creation of an Anti-Terrorism Council (ATC), composed of unelected Cabinet officials, with an intimidating amount of power and resources, to be supported by various government offices including the police and military intelligence.

We are concerned that “The Anti-Terrorism Act” may be weaponized against people who express legitimate concerns or contrary opinions against the government whether individually or collectively. The right to organize is an important feature of a democratic society. The right to freedom of speech, including dissent, also serves a vital role in healthy public discourse.

We are alarmed that despite more urgent matters concerning public health and economic security in the context of the pandemic, such a bill with potential for division and violence has already passed Congress and Senate with the support of President Duterte.

We believe that now more than ever is a time for solidarity, especially for the poor and vulnerable among us, rather than division and persecution. The number of COVID-19 cases continues to increase every day and unemployment is on the rise. The pandemic has exacerbated chronic poverty. We appeal to the State to prioritize and respond to the more fundamental threats to Filipinos’ rights and well-being which are poverty and inequality. Rather than focus on the manifestations of unrest, the government should address what is at the root of it. It is in this spirit that we ask the government to promote peace by addressing people's basic needs and well-being with urgency. It is our hope that in solidarity with one another, we will contribute to the coming of the justice and peace of God’s Kingdom.