



PRESS RELEASE

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### **PROGUN response to the Firearms Regulation Act**

Senator Franklin Drilon recently filed Senate Bill No. 129, known as the Firearms Regulation Act, with the aim of addressing firearms-related crime in the country. Under the bill, only authorized personnel on duty may bear arms. Senator Drilon, a highly capable and widely respected law-maker with a long track-record of service to the Filipino people, is unfortunately off the mark with this move.

Strict gun-control policies around the world have consistently shown that denying citizens access to the legal means of self-defense does nothing to prevent violent crime. In fact, they succeed only in turning people into victims of criminals and creating a new criminal class among ordinary law-abiding citizens.

In a blog post explaining his decision to push for stricter gun control, Senator Drilon says that the right to carry firearms outside of residences is not based on well-founded facts. He also cites the tragic shooting in Tucson, Arizona, as evidence of the deadly consequences of allowing guns in the streets.<sup>[1]</sup>

However, if we are to look at the facts, we will find that after 30 years of concealed-carry rights in the United States, more citizens than ever are legally carrying firearms yet the nation is experiencing a decrease in violent crime.<sup>[2]</sup> The FBI's crime report showed that for the first half of 2009, violent crime in America dropped dramatically even though gun ownership surged.<sup>[3]</sup> It is also interesting to note that the states with tighter gun control, like California, District of Columbia, and New York, have among the highest violent crime rates in the country.<sup>[4]</sup> Tellingly, the recent high-profile shootings at Fort Hood and Virginia Tech occurred in 'gun-free' zones.

As to the Tucson shooting, this is in fact an example of how laws do not stop society's predators. The gunman, Jared Lee Loughner, was mentally unstable and thus not legally eligible to own a firearm.<sup>[5]</sup> Nevertheless, he was still able to kill six people and wound 13 others. No law can ever fully protect us from the random act of an insane individual. According to eye-witnesses, it took 20 minutes for the police to reach the scene.<sup>[6]</sup> In the meantime, the gunman was stopped only when he was tackled by bystanders, one of whom was concealed-carry permit holder Joe Zamudio.<sup>[7]</sup> As we see time and again from similar incidents in the past, the surest way to save lives is for responsible citizens to act until law enforcement can arrive.

When it comes to firearms legislation on both sides of the fence, the United States undoubtedly has more experience than any other country. People have realized that prohibition doesn't protect the law-abiding and legislature is catching up. States are increasingly relaxing their stance with a wave of pro-firearms laws<sup>[8][9][10][11][12]</sup> and despite the Tucson shooting, public opinion is still firmly against tougher gun control.<sup>[13]</sup>

What happens when a less developed country institutes firearms prohibition? We simply need to look towards Jamaica, Mexico, Rwanda, and Venezuela to see the outcome. Violent crime goes up.

Senator Drilon has brought great respect and admiration upon our nation by being elected as Chairman of the IPU Committee on Human Rights of Parliamentarians. He is the first Filipino legislator to take the seat since the organization was established in 1889. Under this role, he has surely come to understand better than many the dangers of abuse perpetrated by those in power, especially in a weak democracy.<sup>[14]</sup> The lesson of both ancient and recent Human history is that a disarmed population eventually succumbs to the predations of tyrants; free people are trusted by their leaders to be armed.

Senate Bill No. 129 states that only authorized personnel on duty may bear arms. In the Philippines, it is common knowledge that crimes and human rights abuses are regularly committed by those who claim to protect us. Furthermore, the overwhelming majority of firearms-related violent incidents involve thugs who obey no law. What hope have we of maintaining our freedoms if the only armed groups in society have amongst their ranks the corrupt and rotten who prey on innocents?

There have indeed been cases where civilians carrying firearms have abused their privilege and these incidents were widely reported in the national media. Nevertheless, they gained attention exactly because they are rare. The vicious altercations that are scattered in day-to-day newspaper reports are predominantly initiated by dangerous criminals, not law-abiding firearms permit holders. It is a distressing reality that violence is a fact of life and this truth is interwoven in the story of the Human race. But a world without risks is an impossible goal to attain. In an open and just society, these criminal cases are handled through the calm execution of existing good laws, not the rushed knee-jerk implementation of bad ones.

Our country already has more than enough firearms laws but these are inconsistently applied or poorly thought out. What we need is an overhaul, not a band-aid on a twisted and broken limb. All sides of the firearms debate share the desire to protect the public from harm. This can be best achieved with a push for education, increased training and a culture of safety in both our citizens and law enforcement personnel alike.

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PROGUN, the Peaceful Responsible Owners of Guns, seeks preserve the freedom accorded to each and every qualified law abiding citizen to purchase, own and carry firearms in the Philippines. Please visit <http://progun.ph> to find out more about us. If you'd like more information about this press release or to schedule an interview, please contact the PROGUN board at [info@progun.ph](mailto:info@progun.ph).

Sources:

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