

JGL Eye Column

By JOSEPH G. LARIOS

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C HICAGO (*jGLi*) – Overseas Filipino Workers are vulnerable to harassments and exploitations by hosts of their adopted countries. This is a given. For this reason, OFW’s should be very extra careful in their dealings with their hosts if they have no previous associations with them.

If an OFW notices a red flag, the OFW should start to backtrack and take the path of least resistant: find a way to get out!

He should always bear in mind the slogan popularized by former U.S. First Lady Nancy Reagan – “Just Say No.” Or just remember the message of the French fairy tale, Little Red Riding Hood, where the little girl should have sprinted away after noticing the “big hands” and the “big teeth” of a wolf,” who swallowed her grandmother whole while the wolf was pretending to be her grandmother.

Sometimes, even if a fellow Filipino would cajole another Filipino into doing something that will involve a

third party, “Just Say No” to your fellow Filipino, because this fellow Filipino has no control of the action of the third party.

Let your fellow Filipino be mad at you if you are just trying to save your skin. To hell with your fellow Filipino! *Pakikisama* (comradeship) has its limits!

This scenario happened to a Filipino in Saudi Arabia, when two of his Filipino friends invited him over to a home of a Saudi Arabian.

COULD NOT SAY “NO”

According to records of the Court of Appeals in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Manila-born Rodelio “Dondon” Lanuza, a 26-year-old draftsman, who completed an architecture degree at the MLQ University in Manila, was invited by two Filipino friends to the home of a Saudi at about 8:30 p.m. on Aug. 10, 2000.

Once in the home of the Saudi, Mr. Lanuza and his two friends were treated to a dinner. After a while, the three Filipinos were offered to drink scotch. Although, Lanuza initially refused to take a drink, the Saudi host insisted. Instead of saying no and bidding the host goodbye, Lanuza caved in.

At about ten in the evening, Lanuza and his two Filipino friends bid their host goodbye but the Saudi host prevailed upon them to stay around. After a while, the Saudi host relented and let them leave on condition that in case the police ask them where they took the drinks, they should not tell on their Saudi host.

While Lanuza was already home, their Saudi host suddenly got inside his room, apparently while his door was open. The Saudi host asked Lanuza if he could accompany him to drive around the city. Instead of saying no again, Lanuza accepted the invitation, because he was “expecting that he was a good man.”

After a short period, Lanuza was surprised the Saudi host drove him to the home of the Saudi host.

Because of the sensitive nature of the case and while the case is still pending, the family of Mr. Lanuza told me not to write the details about what happened in the home of the Saudi. I can only say a struggle ensued inside the Saudi host’s house, resulting in the

“accidental” killing of the Saudi host. Mr. Lanuza sustained stab wounds in the neck and other parts of his body.

LIFE OR \$800K?

The family of the host had charged Lanuza with the killing of the host attended with “aggression and intentional.” As a result, the family asked the court for a Qisas (retaliation) thru beheading under the Islamic principle “an eye for an eye” or lex talionis as laid down by Hammurabi and later the Old Testament and later legal codes.

But Lanuza’s lawyer has filed an appeal, which is still pending.

Two weeks ago, I talked to Lanuza’s mother, Mrs. Letty Lanuza (letty@lbcusa.net), who told me that the family of the Saudi host is willing to withdraw their request with the court to spare the life of Dondon Lanuza provided Lanuza’s family will come up with

“blood money” in the amount of 3-Million riyals (US\$800,000) to the Saudi host’s family.

If Lanuza loses in the appeal, perhaps, he can ask for reduced amount of blood money because he has now converted from Christian to Muslim religion.

Under the Shari’a law observed in Saudi Arabia, when a person has been killed or caused to die by another, the blood money is highest if the victim is a Muslim man. It gradually comes down when the victim is a Muslim woman, Christian or Jewish man, Christian or Jewish woman, if a man is of any other religion or a woman is of any other religion.

So far the Lanuza family has only raised 450,000 pesos or US\$10,714 or .01% of the total blood money demanded. Mrs. Lanuza, a resident of Las Vegas, Nevada, said her family has opened a bank account to raise fund for the “blood money” of her son at Metro Bank in Malolos, Bulacan with SAVINGS ACCOUNT Account Number: 575-3-575-01112-9 in what is called ‘BARYA NG BUHAY KO’ fund raising.

19 U.S. CENT PER OFW

She said the 3-Million riyals can no longer go down as the Saudi host family has already reduced it from 5-Million riyals to 3-Million riyals.

Mrs. Lanuza said there is urgency for her family to raise the “blood money” sooner because if the Saudi host’s children, now aged 7 and 9, will reach 18, it is going to be a new ball game. The grown-up children can accept the blood money or ask the court to

re-instate the beheading.

Meanwhile, there have been some pledges received from donors. There is even a donor, who is willing to match a donation up to “One-Million Pesos Challenge (US\$23,809) Grant” but the donor would like to remain anonymous.

It's about time groups speaking on behalf of Overseas Filipinos should get their act together and start the ball rolling for a fund-raising.

In 2007, the Philippine Embassies and Consulates all over the world reported that there were 4,227,173 Filipinos overseas. If each of these Filipinos will contribute 19 U.S. cents each, it should be able to raise \$800,000.

Hopefully, the Philippine Overseas Workers Welfare Administration will channel part of the money it collects from the OFWs to buy “blood money” insurance from big insurance companies, like Lloyds of London, so that in case another OFW will be asked to pay “blood money,” there is no more need to ask OFWs to pass the hat around the world to spare the life of another. #
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