

TOPIC:

How should companies handle possible issues regarding discrimination against Chinese citizens and/or harassment + name calling instances because the virus allegedly began in China?

Time and circumstances have definitely changed our perspective. Take for example the treatment to Chinese and other Asian nationals when the Corona virus or COVID-19 began to spread outside of the center of the epidemic, Wuhan, China.

Many have associated the virus to these Asian nationals and Filipinos were not spared. Even the most influential leader in the world, US President Donald Trump, was quoted referring to the COVID-19 as “Chinese virus”. This caused raucous debates on the propriety (or impropriety) of such a term globally.

While it is difficult to suppress discrimination especially during this extraordinary time, the dissemination of true and proper information could help remove the stigma or inappropriate labels being attached to a specific race or nation. Discriminating against a particular race, such as the Chinese, is not without legal consequences under the Philippine legislation.

Presidential Decree No. 966, or the law “Declaring Violations of the International Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination to be Criminal Offenses and Providing Penalties Therefore” prohibits all organizations and all propaganda activities that promote and incite racial discrimination, and imposes penalties of up to 1 year for its violation, including related regulation such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (Article 4, paragraphs a, b and c).

To quote, Article 4, paragraphs a, b and c of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination states that: the State parties "(a) Shall declare an offense punishable by law all dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority or hatred, incitement to racial discrimination, as well as all acts of violence or incitement to such acts against any race or group of persons of another color or ethnic origin, and also the provision of any assistance to racist activities, including the financing thereof; (b) Shall declare illegal and prohibit organizations, and also organized and all other propaganda activities, which promote and incite racial discrimination, and shall recognize the participation in such organizations or activities as an offense punishable by law;(c) Shall not permit public authorities or public institutions, national or local, to promote or incite racial discrimination”.

Clearly, discrimination against any individual on account of his race or origin, such as making a disparaging remark against the Chinese because of COVID-19, clearly falls within Article 4, letter (a), as it tends to cause “hatred, incitement to racial discrimination, as well as all acts of violence or incitement to such acts against any race or group of persons of another color or ethnic origin”.

In difficult times like these, truth and correct information rather than “fake news” or exaggerated reports count. Focusing on what is more important, like providing solutions against COVID-19 rather than playing the blame game is what is needed in order to recover from this crisis. While the entire nation is still suffering because of the uncertainties in its own economies, today is the

best time to look how the specific nation—in this case, China—has recovered and risen up to address the pandemic.

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