PDEA EXPRESSES CONCERN OVER RISING INCIDENCE OF MINORS INVOLVED IN ILLEGAL DRUG ACTIVITIES; SUPPORTS SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 19

The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) has expressed concern over the rising incidence on the involvement of minors in illegal drug activities.

PDEA Director General Isidro S. Lapeña bared the updates based on consolidated report of operational accomplishments of all anti-drug units in the country.

In 2015, a total of 221 minors were rescued nationwide from the illegal drug trade and endorsed to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) offices for custody. Fifty percent of them were aged 17 years old.

“Last year’s number is 22 percent higher than the data in 2014, when 181 minors were arrested. PDEA also noted a significant increase in the use of minors in drug activities in recent years. In 2013, a total of 148 minors were rescued, compared to the 125 in 2012,” Lapeña noted.

“The utilization of minors in drug trafficking activities is continuously observed over the years. Since 2011 to July 2016, there are already 956 minors involved in illegal drug activities. The youngest minor rescued is six years old which recorded the youngest suspect arrested for a drug offense since 2003,” Lapeña said, citing that drug personalities are getting younger.

The rescued minors are mainly composed of possessors of dangerous drugs (methamphetamine hydrochloride, or shabu, and marijuana) with 412 or 43.09 percent; 370 or 38.70 percent were pushers and 97 or 10.15 percent were users.
PDEA has pinned the blame on drug syndicates taking advantage of Section 6 of the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006 which exempts minors or children from criminal liability for the increase in the figures. Although they are minors, they will still be criminally liable under Republic Act 9344 if the court finds that they acted with discernment in violating the anti-drug law.

On the other hand, Senate Resolution No. 19, or a “Resolution Directing the Appropriate Senate Committees to Conduct an Inquiry, in Aid of Legislation, on Effective Drug Prevention and Intervention for the Youth”, sponsored by Senator Paolo Benigno (Bam) A. Aquino IV, was proposed to mitigate the problem on the use of minors in the drug trade.

“PDEA supports the proposed bill of Senator Aquino. When it is enacted into law, we will be assured that comprehensive and unified programs preventing the youth from becoming victims of the drug menace will be implemented by concerned government agencies,” Lapeña said.

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