

## Organisers of Philippine Event Targeted

**Amelia Tan and Priscilla Goy**  
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They receive anonymous phone calls demanding carnival's cancellation

ORGANISERS of a Philippine event in Orchard Road which has ignited anti-foreigner comments online have now become the targets.

But these attacks have prompted some Singaporeans to speak up against the xenophobic comments, which they said have gone overboard.

The event organisers said they have been harassed with anonymous phone calls demanding the cancellation of the June 8 carnival at Ngee Ann City's Civic Plaza. "The callers say we have no right to hold the event in Orchard Road," said organiser Rychie Andres of the Pilipino Independence Day Council Singapore (PIDCS).

"We do not dare to pick up phone calls now if we don't recognise the number."

Many calls have been filled with expletives and are often made late at night, said the non-profit group, which is made up of about 20 Filipino volunteers.

The organisers do not plan to report the calls to the police because they do not want to escalate matters, they said.

They had posted their mobile numbers online to allow people who are interested in celebrating the Philippine Independence Day to contact them.

But they did not expect their post on Facebook, which was put up at the weekend, to draw such brickbats from Singaporean netizens. They were criticised for a range of things, from holding the celebration in Orchard Road to using the Marina Bay skyline in a logo, prompting the group to take down the Facebook post.

Still, the full-day carnival will proceed, said PIDCS, which hopes to draw more than 10,000 people. The group has support from local experts and netizens, who condemned the negative comments, and stressed that the majority of Singaporeans do not share these views.

National University of Singapore sociologist Tan Ern Ser said some Singaporeans see Filipinos as competitors for jobs and "harbour a sense of insecurity".

"However, I doubt the majority share the same strong negative sentiments, even if they would much prefer less competition for jobs, space, amenities, and infrastructures in Singapore."

Many Singaporeans, who spoke up against the vitriol on the Straits Times Facebook page, agreed that most locals are welcoming of foreigners.

Retiree David Kwok, 63, said: "The comments made on Facebook are generally from people who overreact. They are a loud minority."

Assistant product manager Lee Li Ling, 25, added: "The reaction is unjustified and pretty shameful, almost to the point of embarrassment."

Institute of Policy Studies senior research fellow Leong Chan Hoong called on Singaporeans to be generous. "We have our Singapore Day in public parks in London and Melbourne. Why can't we allow foreigners to do the same?" said the analyst of migration and cross-cultural issues.

Tampines GRC MP Baey Yam Keng said netizens have the right to express their feelings but should not "go overboard".

"The Filipino community has been contributing to Singapore in the workplace and helping to take care of Singaporean families," he added.

Filipinos here said they were saddened by the comments, but will take them in their stride.

Finance executive Nilo Lopez, 42, a Singapore permanent resident, said: "Sometimes people don't think before they post comments online. I have never encountered a Singaporean who has been rude to me in person in the 17 years I have been living here."

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