News



Members of the congregation pray during a Sept. 22 Mass at a Catholic church in Quezon City, Philippines. The Philippine House of Representatives has not renewed the license of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines to operate dozens of radio stations across the country. (CNS/Dondi Tawatao, Reuters)

by Catholic News Service

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Manila, Philippines — October 20, 2017

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

The Philippine House of Representatives has not renewed the license of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines to operate dozens of radio stations across the country.

The bishops lodged an application to renew the license in January, because their previous one was due to expire Aug. 7, reported ucanews.com. The application, which sought the extension of the license, or franchise, for another 25 years, remains stuck at the committee level of the Lower House of Congress.

Philippine law requires radio and television networks to have a franchise, which is granted through legislation by Congress, to be able to operate, reported ucanews.com. The franchise granted to the bishops' conference was last renewed in 1992.

At least 54 radio stations under the country's Catholic Media Network would be affected by the failure of the renewal of the franchise this year. Despite the nonrenewal of its franchise, several Catholic radio stations continue to operate.

The network's stations reach 11 regions and 35 provinces of the country. It is the largest broadcaster in the Philippines in terms of the total number of stations and transmitting power per station.

Radio Veritas, a radio station operated by the Manila Archdiocese, has a separate franchise that was renewed during the previous administration.

Fr. Jerome Secillano, executive secretary of the public affairs committee of the bishops' conference, said he is not discounting politics as the reason for the failure of the franchise renewal, especially because Catholic Church leaders have been vocal in criticizing President Rodrigo Duterte.

"It's sad that politics could get in the way of our democratic processes," said the priest, adding that "it may be one reason why Congress didn't renew the franchise."

Secillano, however, said the real losers were the people who relied on the service.

Advertisement

"It's the voice of the people and our search for truth that's being undermined by Congress," he said.

In mid-October, House Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez, an ally of Duterte, called the bishops' conference "thick faced" for criticizing the government.

Congressman Franz Alvarez, chairman of the House Committee on Legislative Franchises, said the inaction on the bishops' application was due to the number of applications the legislative body had to attend to and it was "still awaiting hearing."

[The original story can be found at https://www.ucanews.com/news/philippine-catholics-fear-silencing-of-54-radio-stations/80584.]