

Title: Samahan ng Mga Progresibong Kabataan (SPARK) et al. v. Quezon City et al.

Facts:

Several local governments in Metro Manila enforced curfew ordinances on minors as part of President Rodrigo Duterte's campaign for a nationwide curfew for minors, executed through police operations known as "Oplan Rody." Among the local governments were Quezon City, Manila, and Navotas, which issued ordinances setting curfew hours for minors and prescribing penalties for violations. SPARK, an organization of young adults and minors, along with individual petitioners, assailed the constitutionality of these ordinances on grounds that they violated minors' constitutional rights and contravened the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act (RA 9344), as amended by RA 10630.

The procedural posture included the filing of the present petition by SPARK and individual petitioners, arguing that the curfew ordinances were unconstitutional due to their vagueness, overbreadth, direct impairment of the rights to liberty and travel for minors, and infringement of parents' natural and primary right to raise their children. The petitioners also argued that the penal provisions of the Manila Ordinance were ultra vires. The case escalated to the Supreme Court after lower forums, including local government units, failed to resolve the constitutional issues to the satisfaction of petitioners.

Issues:

1. Whether the curfew ordinances are void due to vagueness and lack of enforcement standards.
2. Whether the curfew ordinances infringe upon the constitutional right of minors to travel.
3. Whether the curfew ordinances usurp the parents' right to rear their children.
4. Whether the penal provisions of the Manila Ordinance violate RA 9344, as amended.

Court's Decision:

The Supreme Court partly granted the petition. It held that:

1. The curfew ordinances were not void for vagueness as they did not lack comprehensible standards, and RA 9344 provides guidelines for enforcing authorities.
2. The Quezon City Ordinance is constitutional as it satisfactorily meets the requirements of the strict scrutiny test, providing adequate exceptions to ensure minimal constraints on minors' fundamental rights, including travel.
3. The curfew ordinances of Manila and Navotas are unconstitutional as they do not provide the least restrictive means to achieve the compelling state interest of protecting minors.
4. The penal provisions of the Manila Ordinance imposing fines and imprisonment on minors

for curfew violations directly conflict with RA 9344, as amended, and are, therefore, invalid.

Doctrine:

1. The void for vagueness doctrine applies only when a law or ordinance lacks clear standards that men of common intelligence must guess at its meaning and differ in application, infringing due process.
2. Fundamental rights, including the right to travel, can be restricted by the State in the interest of compelling state interests provided that the restrictions are narrowly tailored to achieve those interests.
3. Local government units must not contravene existing law, and ordinances should conform to statutory law including national policies on juvenile welfare.

Class Notes:

- The right to travel is a fundamental right guaranteed by the Philippine Constitution and can be subject to lawful restrictions in the interest of national security, public safety, or public health.
- Parental rights in child-rearing are protected by the Constitution, and state intervention is justified only to aid parents in promoting their children's welfare and development.
- RA 9344, as amended, prohibits the imposition of penalties on minors for status offenses, including curfew violations.
- The strict scrutiny test applies to legislative classifications that affect fundamental rights or burden suspect classes, requiring a showing of a compelling state interest and the least restrictive means to protect such interest.

Historical Background:

The controversy over the curfew ordinances and their constitutional challenge is rooted in the broader context of the Philippine government's campaign to enforce a nationwide curfew for minors aimed at enhancing public order and safety. The campaign and subsequent strict implementation during President Duterte's term highlights the tension between government regulatory measures and the constitutional rights of individuals, particularly minors, underscoring the dynamic interplay between legislation, enforcement, and judicial review. The case reflects the judiciary's crucial role in balancing state interests with individual liberties, using established legal doctrines within the Philippines' historical and social framework.