



In conferring the PAFIOO Kaanib ng Bayan Award upon Bader Ahmed J. Al Zafeen, the President recognizes his compassion and dedication to safeguarding the welfare of Filipinos in the United Arab Emirates, as demonstrated in his DNA project that ensured legal documentation and facilitated the repatriation of undocumented Filipino children and their mothers.

Bader Ahmed J. Al Zafeen

United Arab Emirates

In the intricate web of global migration, few communities stand as resilient and determined as the Filipino diaspora. Spread across continents, millions of Filipinos sacrifice proximity to their homeland in pursuit of better opportunities. For many, this journey is fraught with hardship as they grapple with the emotional and logistical challenges of living far from home. The situation becomes even more precarious for the disadvantaged and undocumented, whose daily lives are marked by fear and a desperate search for stability as they navigate the uncertainties of foreign land.

Amidst these challenges, allies emerge as crucial pillars of support. And in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), a beacon of hope has emerged for these vulnerable individuals: UAE Police Major Bader Ahmed J. Al Zafeen. His steadfast advocacy and support for undocumented Filipino children and their families have proven that one individual's efforts can change the trajectory of countless lives.

Service-Oriented Career

Born in 1980 in Dubai, UAE, Major Al Zafeen's life has been defined by a deep commitment to public service and humanitarianism. After obtaining his bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering from Washington State University in 2008, he pursued a career in law enforcement, joining the Dubai Police Academy where he earned a diploma in Police Law and Order. He continued his academic journey with a Master's degree in Engineering Management from Griffith University in Australia, refining his skills to serve the community more effectively.

Major Al Zafeen started his distinguished career with the Dubai Police in 2009, demonstrating his expertise and commitment to public safety. His early years in law enforcement were marked by his work as a Traffic Accident Investigator, where he handled cases involving fatalities and casualties and played a critical role in traffic accident reconstruction that honed his

attention to detail and problem-solving abilities. Later, his expertise was brought to the Traffic Forecasting Division and Traffic Engineering Coordination, where he focused on road safety during major events in Dubai, analyzing accident data and promoting traffic safety education. Today, he serves as the Deputy Director of Criminal Investigation for Specialized Sections, continuing to lead efforts that enhance public safety and law enforcement practices in Dubai.

The DNA Project

While Major Al Zafeen's professional achievements are impressive, his humanitarian initiatives truly set him apart. While serving in the Diplomatic Affairs Section of the Dubai Police's General Department of Criminal Investigation, he showed determination and proactive involvement in addressing the challenges encountered by the Filipino community in Dubai. Since 2021, he has been at the forefront of efforts to assist undocumented Filipino children born outside of marriage—a group that had long been denied basic services like education and healthcare because of their lack of legal documentation. The UAE's legal reforms around undocumented children provided a window of opportunity, and Major Al Zafeen seized it.

He launched the DNA Project, a groundbreaking initiative that provided free genetic testing to parents and their children, enabling undocumented children to gain legal recognition and aiding in their repatriation. This project, conducted in collaboration with the Dubai Police's Forensics Department and the Philippine Consulate General in Dubai, removed a significant financial burden from families who could not afford the typical costs associated with DNA testing and legal proceedings at the UAE's Personal Status Court.

Without the DNA Project, these families would have faced steep expenses as DNA tests in Dubai can range from AED 2,100 to AED 3,000 (₱33,000 to ₱47,000) for every person, sums that are often beyond the reach of undocumented individuals. Thanks to Major Al Zafeen's initiative, about 295 Filipino mothers and children have been able to secure legal documentation.

Impact Beyond Borders

By 2023, Major Al Zafeen's efforts had led to savings of AED 775,987 (₱12.4 million) for the Philippine government, which would have otherwise shouldered the costs of DNA tests, immigration fines, and court fees. But beyond the numbers lies the real impact of his work: the restoration of dignity and hope for families who had lived in the shadows, their children denied access to fundamental rights.

Major Al Zafeen's initiative streamlined repatriation procedures by collaborating with immigration

authorities to expedite exit clearances, a process that typically costs AED 200 to AED 800 (₱3,150 to ₱12,500) per child. Through his efforts, exit clearances were obtained without delays and complications, further easing the financial and emotional burden on families. His direct intervention also prevented mothers from facing detention—a fate that had often befallen women who had given birth outside of marriage in the UAE. By ensuring these vulnerable individuals were protected from legal entanglements, he enabled them to return to the Philippines with dignity and the possibility of rebuilding their lives.

Through his relentless efforts, Major Al Zafeen has overseen the successful repatriation of over 118 children and their families. These children, once undocumented and without access to education or healthcare, are now back in the Philippines, where they have the opportunity to pursue a brighter future.

The DNA Project stands as a testament to Major Al Zafeen's deep compassion and unwavering belief in justice for all. It not only provided a solution to an immediate legal issue but also opened the door to long-term stability for families who had once lived in fear and uncertainty. His work underscores the importance of international cooperation and compassion in addressing the complex issues faced by migrant communities.

A True Humanitarian

Major Al Zafeen's humanitarian efforts have not gone unnoticed. Over the years, he has received numerous accolades for his exceptional contributions to public service and safety. In 2019, he was awarded a Certificate of Appreciation by the General Department of Criminal Investigation for his work in solving traffic accidents.

In 2018, he earned a Badge of Appreciation for his academic achievements, and in 2013 and 2012, he was honored with the prestigious First Class Sincere Service Award and the Order of Excellent Service Award, respectively, by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai. These awards reflect his embodiment of the highest values of public service, integrity, and excellence.

Major Al Zafeen's career is a shining example of what one person's dedication can achieve. His tireless advocacy for undocumented children and their families has not only alleviated the financial and bureaucratic burdens faced by the Philippine government but has also restored hope and dignity to countless individuals. Through his work, Major Al Zafeen has built a legacy of compassion and service that transcends borders, inspiring others to take up the mantle of justice and inclusivity.