



For Immediate Release

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## **ON THE PRESIDENTIAL PARDON OF CLAUDIO TEEHANKEE JR.**

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita is correct in saying that the power to commute sentences and grant pardons is a presidential prerogative enshrined in the Constitution. However, in resorting to this argument to parry widespread criticism of the executive clemency granted to convicted murderer Claudio Teehankee Jr., the government betrayed a disturbing lack of respect for victims' rights and the public's right to information.

While the government may have made the motions to meet the minimum requirements of the law with the notification of the Hultman family—which the Hultmans never received—and the publication of a notice when Teehankee applied for executive clemency, the recent statements of Mr. Ermita and Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez have demonstrated a dismaying indifference to the plight of the victims' families, insisting that the government was under no obligation to inform the Hultman family about the presidential pardon. But why deny the Hultmans, one of the grievously offended parties in this case, the courtesy and the right to be informed and to respond to the government decision?

The lack of transparency in the granting of the pardon, given the sensational nature and public attention that surrounded this case, can only lead people to question the motives behind the Arroyo Administration's actions. The just-released Global Competitiveness Report 2008–2009 of the World Economic Forum indicates that the Philippines has not made any headway in improving its competitiveness rankings, and the study points out that one of the major reasons for this is the poor quality of the country's public institutions. With the Arroyo Administration's mishandling of the Teehankee case, we only see a further erosion in the people's trust in our public institutions.

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