



Press Statement

28 September 2009

## **MBC UPHOLDS THE PEOPLE'S RIGHT TO KNOW**

The Filipino people's basic right to information on matters of public concern is enshrined in the Bill of Rights (Article 3, Section 7) of the 1987 Constitution. It promotes transparency and accountability in governance, thereby making it one of the indispensable pillars of a democracy.

In recent years, however, we have repeatedly witnessed how an uncooperative government's withholding of official information has frustrated the people's search for truth on critical issues of public concern. In the Senate hearings on the Hello Garci recordings, fertilizer fund scam, and the North Rail project, the inquiries repeatedly ran into the stonewall of Executive Order 464, as ranking officials of the executive department and military invoked the order to justify their refusal to divulge vital information or their non-appearance in the hearings. Up to now, the military has not released the full text of the Mayuga Report that cleared high-ranking military officials of involvement in electoral fraud in the May 2004 presidential elections. Only a two-page summary of the report was read in a press briefing in April 2006 that was timed to minimize media coverage.

In the interest of good governance, accountability, and justice, it is therefore imperative that Congress prioritize the passage of a Freedom of Information Act that will unequivocally guarantee citizens' right to government information and set clear parameters for exceptions. The House of Representatives has already passed and referred to the Senate its version (House Bill 3732), while the Senate version (Senate Bill 3308) is still awaiting its second reading.

Today, September 28, as we join the rest of the world in the commemoration of International Right to Know Day, the Makati Business Club urges Congress, especially the Senate, to move for the immediate passage of the Freedom of Information Act and bring our country one step closer to joining the ranks of the world's true and fully functioning democracies.

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