

Press Statement

26 November 2009

### **MBC STATEMENT ON THE MAGUINDANAO MASSACRE**

The Makati Business Club expresses its deepest sympathies to the families of the victims of the November 23 Maguindanao massacre.

We condemn in the strongest possible terms the brutal slaying of women, journalists, and other innocent and defenseless civilians. The perpetrators of this heinous crime have no place in society and no effort must be spared to consign them under the swift and full measure of the law.

In this regard, we hold the government fully accountable for seeing to it that justice is served. Preliminary reports from the ground, including those relayed by the Armed Forces' spokesman, point to the direct involvement of a member of the Ampatuan clan, staunch political allies of the Arroyo administration, and members of the local Philippine National Police. The government must now prove to the Filipino people and the international community that its utterances of condemnation and avowals that "nobody should be untouchable" will translate to decisive action against those behind this mass murder. Secretary Jesus Dureza's fawning "courtesy call" on the Ampatuan clan does not inspire much confidence in the government's determination to pursue the case to a complete and just resolution.

The brutality, brazenness, and impunity with which the perpetrators executed their horrific crime are difficult to fathom, but become conceivable in the context of the warlord politics the current administration allowed to flourish in Maguindanao and exploited for its political ends. Now, like an overindulgent parent, the government has to rein in the monsters it created. Private armies in Maguindanao, or for that matter throughout the country, must not only be disarmed but also dismantled, for a long-lasting solution to political violence can only be achieved if the political culture is no longer held captive by warlords and their hired guns.

Our country has paid dearly for having ignored the final recommendation of the Davide Commission which so prophetically stated: "The irreducible minimum to peaceful and orderly change, both societal and political, is for all contenders in the political arena to agree to use the ballot and forego the bullet."

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