



Press Statement

4 February 2011

CORRUPTION AND THE WHEELS OF JUSTICE

The Makati Business Club commends former COA auditor Heidi Mendoza and retired AFP budget officer Lieutenant Colonel George Rabusa for their courageous testimonies about the past systematic misappropriation of AFP funds perpetrated it appears by several high-ranking military officials, particularly it seems by former military comptroller General Carlos Garcia. Their decision to testify at the Senate and House hearings comes at clear personal cost, and yet they chose to uphold the public interest and fight for the truth. Ms. Mendoza, in particular, deserves our admiration for her outstanding dedication as a public servant and her commitment to the ethical standards of her profession.

Let us not allow their sacrifices to go in vain. We firmly believe that to exorcise the misdeeds of the past and pave the way for lasting reforms, we need to punish the wrongdoers. Thus, in light of the revelations of Ms. Mendoza and Mr. Rabusa, we strongly urge the Sandiganbayan to scrap the proposed plea bargain agreement with Mr. Garcia. We continue to believe that the plea bargain agreement does not serve the ends of justice. As much as the Ombudsman and the prosecutors assigned to the Garcia plunder case want us to believe that they are doing the country a favor by negotiating with Mr. Garcia, they are clearly doing a disservice to the Filipino people.

Beyond the Garcia case, we also appeal to President Aquino and to the current leaders of the Armed Forces of the Philippines to further investigate and, if truly warranted, prosecute the retired military officials who were implicated in Mr. Rabusa's testimony. There is a pressing need to take a closer look at the problem of corruption within the military establishment, to see to it that the conversion and *pabaon* systems have truly been abolished and that audit processes and systems have been strengthened. Perhaps the military can even tap the private sector's expertise in this area.

Certainly, the worst thing that we can do is to sweep this under the rug and look the other way. As our foot soldiers, who are the biggest victims in all these, risk their lives for the country, we owe it to them to clean the military's ranks and see to it that justice is served.

Finally, the Makati Business Club joins the appeals for the Supreme Court to finally resolve the petition filed by Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez questioning the impeachment complaints filed against her at the House of Representatives. It has been over four months since the Supreme Court issued a status quo ante order that effectively halted the impeachment proceedings pending the resolution of Ms. Gutierrez's petition. We respectfully call on the Supreme Court to let the wheels of justice in this case finally move forward. Now, more than ever, the country needs an inspiring corruption fighter who will send a compelling and unmistakable message that crime does not pay and that wrongdoers will be punished.

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