

Editorial: The First Couple Must Stop Bullying Critics, Including Bishops Critical of the Arroyo Regime

We join Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. (PDP-Laban) in condemning President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and First Gentleman Miguel Arroyo in their attempt to bully critics of the Arroyo Dispensation.

Senator Pimentel has issued a statement that said that the Arroyo government could gain nothing by pursuing its harassment suit against Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Oscar Cruz. The suit stemmed from Archbishop Cruz's statement that allegedly demeaned 20 female employees of the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR) who entertained guests during a birthday party of First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo about four years ago.

Senator Pimentel sees no malicious intention on Archbishop Cruz's part since the prelate was apparently taking the cudgels for the PAGCOR female employees and defending their right against exploitation. The Filipino people, especially the almost nine-million Overseas Filipinos and Overseas-Filipino contract workers, do not find it amusing to see the Arroyo Dispensation use scarce resources of the Philippine government in filing frivolous suits just to get back at its critics. The action of the Arroyo Dispensation is like a stunt comparable to beating a fly with a shovel. It can be also compared to the scraping of an ant hill with a bulldozer.

With mounting problems that the Philippine homeland faces year in, year out, the Arroyo Administration should concentrate in solving them, rather than in persecuting Archbishop Cruz and/or its numerous critics or detractors.

Written by Bobby Reyes

Saturday, 17 May 2008 08:18 - Last Updated Saturday, 17 May 2008 08:58

Editor's Note: To read this website's initial report on the Arroyo-Archbishop Cruz's tiff, please click on [Filipino Bishop Follows MabuhayRadio Editorial and "Excommunicates" the President](#)

Mr. Pimentel said the persecution of Archbishop Cruz could even backfire on the Arroyo government as it would further inflame public anger over its shameless attempts to silence the Catholic prelate and other critics by filing criminal charges against them based on flimsy or hollow grounds.

Archbishop Cruz is facing arrest upon order of Judge Antonio Rosales of the Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 52 in connection with the libel case filed by the PAGCOR employees which was endorsed to the court by the Department of Justice four years after it was dismissed by the Manila prosecutor's office for insufficient grounds.

The libel case stemmed from Cruz's statement on June 28, 2004 in which he assailed the alleged "exploitation" of the female PAGCOR employees by allegedly being made to entertain the First Gentleman and his guests like "pitiful GROs (guest relations officers)" during the birthday party held at the Malacañang Park on June 28, 2004.

Senator Pimentel said he saw no malicious intention on the part of Archbishop Cruz since in his statement, he was apparently even taking the cudgels for the female PAGCOR employees and defending their right against exploitation.

"Besides, being a GRO is an honorable profession compared to thieves in government. The administration is only compounding its problems by suing Archbishop Cruz for allegedly libeling the female employees. It should rethink its move," Mr. Pimentel says. Mr. Pimentel said it is outrageous that Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, presumably acting on Malacañang's order, decided to resurrect the "long-dead" libel suit after failing to muzzle Archbishop Cruz through continuing efforts to harass and intimidate him.

He said he finds this move very ironic and incongruent with the First Gentleman's earlier decision to drop several libel suits against about 50 journalists whom he had accused of writing and printing defamatory articles about him. # # #

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