

## How to Break the “Stalemate” in the Philippine National Leadership Crisis - MabuhayRadio

Written by Bobby Reyes

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There is actually a metaphorical version of a stalemate in the current crisis involving the Office of the Philippine President. The political opposition – as backed up by a growing number of civic leaders, civilians and kibitzers – wants to remove the President even by unconstitutional means or force her to resign. On the other hand, the Philippine military, the House of Representatives and a vast majority of provincial governors, city mayors and other local officials continue to support President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (PGMA). The stalemate will only lead to more severe socioeconomic dislocation in the country, as foreign and even Overseas-Filipino investments do not like a climate of uncertainty. But there is a way to break up this stalemate.

Stalemate is a situation in chess where the player whose turn it is to move has no legal moves but is not in check. Stalemate ends the game, with the result a draw. Stalemate is now a widely-used metaphor for other situations where there is a conflict or contest between two parties, such as war or politics, and neither side is able to achieve victory or dominance. It is stalemate when the result is a standoff, or deadlock or simply the maintenance of the status quo.

The only way to resolve the crisis is for PGMA and her backers in the Philippine Congress and the opposition – as led primarily by several Philippine senators – to agree to the naming of an independent prosecutor who will investigate the charges of corruption leveled against the Arroyo Dispensation. And the best way may be to invite Filipino-American lawyers (who are dual American-Filipino citizens), especially those who are now American Superior Court judges, to staff the Office of an Independent Prosecutor.

As of now, the Philippine political opposition would not trust the Philippine Department of Justice and even the Office of the Sandiganbayan to do the functions of an independent prosecutor. On the other hand, PGMA and her allies would not want the Philippine Senate to continue with its investigation of the alleged anomalies in the NBN-ZTEgate, the North-Rail and South-Rail contracts, the fertilizer scam and all the other supposed scandalous deals that the Arroyo Administration has signed with foreign entities and lenders. A separate independent prosecutor may even be named to look at the agreement that the Philippine National Oil Company signed with the Chinese company CNOOC to conduct joint oil exploration in the Spratly Islands.

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Part of or all the hearings by a Filipino-American staffed Office of an Independent Prosecutor may even be done in a Philippine diplomatic post in the United States, with the key witnesses flown for instance to this country. This will assure impartiality and make the witnesses less fearful of threat or intimidation on the part of the Philippine-government officials and their kin alleged to be linked to the scandals.

If the Office of the Philippine President and the political opposition would agree to this suggested way of breaking up the stalemate, then we would call a meeting of Filipino-American associations, federations and coalitions to discuss how to make operational this suggestion and even how to fund from private sources the entire operation.

Any comments, Dear Readers? # # #

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