

Akbayan to Noy: No Gloria, No Mikey, No Merci

Progressive party asks new government to fulfill promise of change, weed out political leftovers and obstacles to justice

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More than a thousand members of Akbayan party staged on Monday a political rally coinciding with President Benigno Simeon Aquino III's first State of the Nation Address. However, unlike in the past, the advocates say their rally is "friendly and temperate" as they want the new government to have the "time and space" to prove its sincerity to the people.

Then again, the group was "up in arms" against certain political personalities and public officials it deemed as obstacles to justice and genuine reform.

"While we give the new administration the opportunity to prove its seriousness in curbing corruption, dispensing justice and providing reforms, there must be no let-up against those that continue to act as obstructions in the process of change, acting as if they are still under the mantle of authority of the previous administration," Akbayan Secretary General Conrad Castillo said.

Castillo stressed that the Aquino administration must weed out "political leftovers of the previous dispensation" saying it must "rectify wrongdoings, strengthen democratic institutions and make accountable those who committed grave transgressions." Particularly, Akbayan trained its guns against former president and now Pampanga Representative Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, recently proclaimed party-list representative Juan Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo and controversial Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez.

In two separate petitions, Akbayan stalwarts Risa Hontiveros and Representative Walden Bello lodged legal complaints against Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez and recently proclaimed party-list representative Juan Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo. Both complaints are calling for the removal of Gutierrez and Arroyo from their respective posts stating that their mere occupation of their respective offices is a direct attack against the people's efforts to purge corruption and in guaranteeing the people's right to suffrage.

"If we want justice to be swiftly delivered to those who hunger for it and if we want to make Ms. Arroyo accountable for her crimes against the people, then the first logical and necessary step is to tear down the line of defense in the ombudsman insulating erring and corrupt public officials from being prosecuted," said Hontiveros who filed a fifteen-page impeachment complaint against Gutierrez at the House of Representatives.

On the other hand, Akbayan Rep. Walden Bello filed before the Supreme Court an urgent motion to decide whether the young Arroyo is eligible to become a member of the 15th congress as a party-list representative. Bello said Arroyo failed to comply with certain requirements mandated by the Commission on Elections. He also said Arroyo's ascension to Congress as a representative of security guards is a mockery of the electoral process and the party-list system.

"As such, while this government says 'no to corruption', it must join the people in saying 'no to

Gloria, Mikey and Merci. It must met out the necessary course of action to deal with this fraudulent personalities masquerading as public officials,” Castillo said.

Meanwhile, Akbayan’s partner labor group asks the Aquino government to provide a policy framework to its anti-corruption and change platform. The Alliance of Progressive Labor says “the campaign must not only remain in the realm of the political but must also have a deep and genuine social dimension.”

“We challenge the Aquino government to unveil a roadmap towards full employment. We hope for a living and dynamic labor agenda under Pres. Aquino revolving around labor rights, housing and social services,” APL said.

The groups marched from Toyota Commonwealth to Ever Gotesco where they conducted their program. Part of their program included 100 Akbayan advocates donned in Noynoy masks taking their oath to “realize the promise of change.” The marchers also unfolded giant streamers and creative placards screaming with “No Mikey, No Merci”, and “Jail Gloria now.”