

Official Akbayan Statement on the Manila Pen Standoff

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Dear Friends,

We wish everyone well as we continue to (comrades and executive officers) monitor here at our national headquarters the events that is now taking place in Makati. The Magdalo soldiers who are on trial walked out of a coup d'état hearing today.

Herewith, is the first batch of updates from the on line news which we have gathered and of course the official statement from the Executive Committee of AKBAYAN.

Thank you and we shall keep you posted on other developments.

In peace and solidarity,

International Committee

Akbayan! Citizen's Action Party

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A crisis of institutions

The incident unfolding in Makati City today is not surprising. It is a logical conclusion to the abuses committed by the GMA administration, from the dismissal of the impeachment complaint to the clamp down of democratic and constitutional processes.

The situation is a result of the refusal of the government to address allegations of fraud and corruption squarely. The administration has evaded and manipulated constitutional processes to hold GMA accountable for allegations of monumental fraud. It compromised attempts to investigate with impartiality allegations of corruption involving the NBN deal; what we have witnessed instead is the brazen giving of pay-offs to legislators and local government officials. It manipulated the military and used coercion to persecute the opposition, as evidenced by the spate of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances..

Sen. Trillanes is an elected public official, and his mandate to serve is clear and not clouded by

cheating and electoral fraud. He was elected with 11 million votes, and even the Senate, through a resolution, affirmed his right to represent his constituency and voted in favor of his serving as Senator. His election reflected the predominantly anti-administration sentiment of the people, and yet the GMA government continued persecuting him and the Magdalo soldiers, with their politically-motivated trial dragging for four years and Sen. Trillanes himself blocked from serving in the Senate.

The nation must root out the problems that have led to this incident. The 'Hello Garci' controversy, the onerous NBN deal, the alleged bribery of legislators and governors, the sham impeachment complaint filed against GMA, and the politically-motivated trial of soldiers involved in the Oakwood mutiny fueled this confrontation, and the crisis would continue to fester as long as the corruption charges and legitimacy questions leveled against the GMA administration are not resolved with credibility.

AKBAYAN urges all forces to seek a peaceful and civilian solution to this incident. We must avoid bloodshed at all cost, and democratic solutions to this problem are only possible through non-violent means. No deadline should be imposed on the Magdalo soldiers since it would only create a climate conducive to a bloody confrontation between the soldiers. A deadline should be imposed for the realization of democratic, peaceful, and credible resolutions to political crisis, and not on a crisis situation that could potentially be violent.

We warn the administration against the use of force to end the situation. The withdrawal of support has so far been peaceful, and the AFP and PNP must not initiate a violent response to the crisis. We warn the government against using the situation to enforce authoritarian measures against the opposition and the public in general.

We support efforts for negotiation to avoid bloodshed. However, negotiations must be founded on a more lasting resolution to the conflict: a credible closure to the allegations of fraud and corruption against the GMA administration, an end to extrajudicial killings, and the strengthening of our democracy.

Akbayan Execom

Military, PNP to storm Makati hotel

<http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/topofthehour.aspx?StoryId=100830>

Security forces are set to storm the Manila Peninsula in Makati City at exactly 3 p.m. to arrest rebel soldiers who have called for President Arroyo's resignation, a high-ranking police official said Thursday.

Director Geary Barias, National Capital Region Police Office director, said he has given the order to clear the area as combined military and police forces get ready to enter the building and enforce the arrests. "Arrests will be made at 3 p.m.," he said.

He added that Judge Oscar Pimentel of Makati Regional Trial Court issued the arrest order after the rebel soldiers left his courtroom during a hearing on the coup case against Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV.

(2nd UPDATE) Trillanes, Lim call for Arroyo ouster

A senator facing coup charges called for President Arroyo's removal Thursday after walking out of a coup d'etat hearing at the Makati City Hall.

Sen. Antonio Trillanes and Army Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim marched out of a Makati courtroom and joined civilians and uniformed military personnel armed with M-16 and M-14 rifles. The soldiers, some of whom were carrying Magdalo flags, marched along Makati Avenue towards the Ninoy Aquino Monument at the corner of Paseo de Roxas and Ayala Avenue.

"This is a withdrawal of support. We are joining our people in calling for the removal of the President," Lim announced over radio dzMM.

He added that they made the call because the President continues to violate the Constitution with impunity by plundering the treasury.

Trillanes also called on the people to join them in Makati. "Magsama-sama tayo. Nanawagan po kami sa taongbayan na naniniwala sa pagbabago. Join us po," he said.

Former vice president Teofisto Guingona, who was marching with the rebel soldiers, said the move is part of various groups' call for the rejection of Mrs. Arroyo's "morally bankrupt" administration.

Reports said a group of farmers have already joined the march.

Leah Navarro of the Black and White Movement said members of the civil society group will also join Trillanes.

The walkout of Trillanes and Lim occurred several minutes after the start of a court hearing at Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 148.

Lim was summoned to attend the hearing as a witness in the coup trial of Trillanes and other junior officers allegedly involved in the botched July 2003 mutiny at the Oakwood Premier (now Ascott Hotel) in Makati City.

The senator's lawyers summoned Lim to testify on the supposed negotiations at the height of the mutiny of the so-called Magdalo group.

Trillanes's camp said Lim would testify that Mrs. Arroyo supposedly promised to spare all but the core leaders of the junior officers from criminal prosecution.

Lim was a member of the government negotiating panel headed by former Armed Forces chief Roy Cimatu. The stand-off between government troops

and the Magdalo group ended peacefully after successful negotiations led to the surrender of the junior officers and soldiers who joined the Oakwood takeover.

Lim, who was the commanding officer of the Army's elite First Scout Ranger Regiment, was later accused of involvement in an aborted power grab in February 2006. He was detained in Camp Capinpin in Tanay, Rizal, along with former Philippine Marines Corps commandant Maj. Gen. Renato Miranda, Col. Ariel Querubin and several Army and Marines officers, pending trial by a court martial.

Trillanes has asked the court to summon Sen. Gregorio Honasan who was initially charged with leading the mutiny in conspiracy with the Magdalo group.

Judge Oscar Pimentel dismissed the charges against Honasan after Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez dropped the senator in the case.

Hotel guests evacuate Manila Peninsula

Guests started evacuating a luxury hotel in Makati City Thursday after a group of rebel soldiers took over the building and demanded the resignation of President Arroyo.

A radio dzMM report said guests at the Manila Peninsula started streaming out of the building ahead of a 2:30 p.m. imposed by the police for the guests' evacuation.

Around 30 rebel soldiers, led by Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim and Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV, took over the hotel after walking out of a court hearing at the Makati City Hall.

The takeover of the Manila Peninsula echoed a similar incident four years ago wherein the same leaders of a failed mutiny took over the Oakwood Hotel in Makati City and demanded Mrs. Arroyo's resignation