

Philippines : For a Democratically-Constituted Supreme Court !

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PLM Picket at the Senate

Corona-Carpio, Walang Pinag-iba !

Supreme Court Justices, Resign All !

No More Presidential Appointees, For a Democratically-Constituted Supreme Court !

THE PARTIDO LAKAS NG MASA (PLM) staged a rally in front of the Philippine Senate building on January 16, Monday, during the opening hearing of the impeachment case against Chief Justice Renato Corona.

Activists belonging to PLM insist that it is not only Chief Justice Corona who should be impeached. To spare the people from further machinations of an Arroyo-controlled Supreme Court and a court beholden to the ruling class' interests, the PLM calls for the resignation of all the Supreme Court justices and for an independent review of the process of selecting Supreme Court justices in accordance with genuinely democratic methods.

The PLM bewails the fact that the Supreme Court has long been seen as an institution that does not serve the interests of the workers and the poor, but a court that only curries favor with factions of the ruling elite, be it the Arroyos, the Lucio Tans or the Danding Cojuangcos of the land. The infamous rulings of the Court include the decision to grant the multibillion-peso coconut levy fund to Marcos' crony Danding Cojuangco, and the reopening and reversal of a Court ruling favorable to flight attendants and stewards (FASAP case) based on a mere letter sent by Lucio Tan's lawyer.

Even the Court's recent decision to distribute the 4,916 hectares of Hacienda Luisita to 6,296 farmworker beneficiaries - the issue that really got President Aquino's ire - has long been overdue and has been used merely to point score against the President. This decision, whose implementation is likely to be delayed by further litigations, comes on the heels of pro-capitalists' and pro-landlords' decisions made by the Court.

We also call on the investigation of Associate Justice Antonio Carpio and all other justices on possible cases of corruption and unexplained wealth during their terms of office. While Corona was reported to have purchased a P14.5-million condominium unit at Bellagio Tower in The Fort, Taguig City - Associate Justice Carpio, the one favored by Malacañang to replace Corona, is alleged to have acquired an 800-square meter unit atop Avignon Tower on HV De la Costa Street in Salcedo Village, Makati. The combined income of the two justices would not be enough to acquire such properties.

We also believe that one of the main reasons we have a factionalized Supreme Court is that the power to appoint Supreme Court justices is in the hands of the President. While it is true that members of the Supreme Court come from a list provided by the Judicial and Bar Council (JBC), the JBC itself is mostly composed of appointees of the President and confirmed by the Commission on Appointments ; thus it is, in turn, controlled by whichever party is in power.

We believe that the people deserve a Supreme Court composed of justices who have proven integrity, competence, probity, and independence ; justices who have clear track records of serving the interests of the people, not factions of the elite.

And to ensure that the court will be independent from the executive and legislative branches of government, we call on the President to adopt a transparent and democratic process in choosing the new justices. This can be based on public nominations, consultations and hearings. Independent people's organizations, including the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, human rights groups, civil society groups, and other interested parties should be asked to nominate members of the Supreme Court based on constitutional requirements.

Sonny Melencio

Chairperson, PLM

January 16, 2012

P.-S.

* Partido Lakas ng Masa. Friday, 20 January 2012 09:36. <http://www.masa.ph/>