

Philippines: Akbayan Rep. Walden Bello calls for the firing of members of the Aquino Cabinet - Akbayan disowns his statements

Saturday 6 December 2014, by [CABACUNGAN Gil C. Jr.](#), [CAYABYAB Marc Jayson](#), [ESGUERRA Christian V.](#), [Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) (Date first published: 4 November 2014).

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Akbayan disowns Bello statements vs Aquino Cabinet

Marc Jayson Cayabyab

MANILA, Philippines—Akbayan party-list disowned the statements of their representative Walden Bello who criticized President Benigno Aquino III's choice of his Cabinet members.

In a statement, the party-list, whose members are part of the administration, said Bello spoke at his own capacity and the statements do not reflect the party's stand.

"Yesterday, one of our representatives in Congress, Walden Bello, was quoted in a major daily calling for the resignation of several high-ranking officials in the Aquino government. For the record, Akbayan has a different position from that of Rep. Bello, which, as he took pains to emphasize in the same article, is solely reflective of his personal opinion and not that of the party," the statement, published in the party-list's website, said.

"While we maintain full confidence that Rep. Bello's statements spring from an honest desire to promote the highest standards of accountability in government, as we have made clear before, his proposals differ from the existing consensus within Akbayan," it added.

In a Philippine Daily Inquirer report, Bello complained of Aquino's choices of Cabinet members, including Vice President Jejomar Binay, Agriculture Secretary Proceso Alcala, Agrarian Reform Secretary Virgilio de los Reyes, Philippine National Police Director General Alan Purisima and Budget Secretary Florencio Abad.

Bello scored Binay for being involved in the allegedly overpriced Makati building from which he was accused of earning kickbacks when he was mayor.

Meanwhile, the solon criticized Abad over the Disbursement Acceleration Program, a savings-impounding mechanism parts of which were declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.

Bello also hit Alcala for being allegedly involved in the pork barrel scam, the purported scheme of

using ghost agriculture and livelihood projects to earn kickbacks.

Meanwhile, Delos Reyes and Purisima were criticized over their failure to keep up with the administration's agrarian reform and law and order agenda.

Purisima also faces false declarations of wealth charges.

"The Aquino administration is losing moral high ground on the anticorruption issue. We cannot have double standard by condemning Vice President Jejomar Binay while tolerating administration allies involved in the (Janet Lim-)Napoles (pork barrel) scam and the (Disbursement Acceleration Program, or DAP). Double standard has a tremendously corrosive effect on civic morality," Bello said.

Bello's statements had apparently irked President Aquino, who sarcastically said that Bello should run for president in 2016 instead of complaining.

"He has so many complaints. I suggest that if he thinks only his views are correct, he should run for president in 2016 and if he's now the President, he could run the country according to his vision," Aquino said.

Akbayan maintained that the party remained supportive of the President's administration. The party-list had allied with Aquino's Liberal Party during the 2013 elections.

"It is, however, unfortunate that the passion in Rep. Bello's remarks has apparently prompted equally strong statements from the administration. We hope that this clarification on Akbayan's official position puts an end to this exchange, and allows us all to focus on the work that remains to be done together," Akbayan said.

* INQUIRER.net 3:46 PM | Tuesday, November 4th, 2014:

<http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/648777/akbayan-disowns-bello-statements-vs-aquino-cabinet#ixzz3L7DGLcJB>

Aquino hits back at Bello: 'He has so many complaints'

MANILA, Philippines - If Akbayan Representative Walden Bello thinks he knows better then he should just run for president in 2016, President Benigno Aquino III said Monday.

He was reacting to a Philippine Daily Inquirer article quoting the administration ally who complained about the President's choice of Cabinet members.

Bello had said that the Aquino administration was "losing the moral high ground on the anti-corruption issue" by not going after its own allies.

"He has so many complaints. I suggest that if he thinks only his views are correct, he should run for president in 2016 and if he's now the President, he could run the country according to his vision," Aquino said. "For now, I think I am doing what is right and necessary."

In the Inquirer article about Aquino's scrutiny of his Cabinet members, Bello said the President should get rid of at least five appointed officials.

He said Vice President Jejomar Binay (as Cabinet member), Agriculture Secretary Proceso Alcala, Agrarian Reform Secretary Virgilio de los Reyes, Philippine National Police Director General Alan Purisima and Budget Secretary Florencio Abad should be fired for tainting the credibility of the Aquino administration.

He complained that the Disbursement Acceleration Program (DAP) fund allocated by Abad's wife, Representative Henedina Abad, for Batanes, was too much. He said P177 million, the sixth largest DAP allocation, was "outrageous" for the country's "smallest district with the smallest population and smallest number of registered voters."

But Aquino, like in the past, defended Abad.

He said it was actually Bello who was thinking like a "trapo" or traditional politician.

"It's like he's saying, let's not put funds in areas that are poor, especially if there are only a few voters. Isn't that an opinion of a trapo?" Aquino said.

"What will happen to the most depressed and poorest provinces if that is our basis of allocating funds? It should not be based on the number of votes that can be received by the politician but based on the population's needs," he explained.

* INQUIRER.net 3:50 PM | Monday, November 3rd, 2014:

<http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/648578/aquino-hits-back-at-bello-he-has-so-many-complaints#ixzz3L7FSkUnr>

Aquino weighs Cabinet members

Christian V. Esguerra, Gil C. Cabacungan

A key ally of President Aquino, Akbayan Rep. Walden Bello, said he should fire not only Vice President Jejomar Binay but also Agriculture Secretary Proceso Alcala, Agrarian Reform Secretary Virgilio de los Reyes, Philippine National Police Director General Alan Purisima and Budget Secretary Florencio Abad to restore the credibility of his reform program.

MANILA, Philippines—President Aquino is scrutinizing the performance of Vice President Jejomar Binay as a member of his Cabinet amid allegations of corruption against Binay and his family, Malacañang said on Sunday.

But a key ally of Aquino said the President should fire not only Binay but also Agriculture Secretary Proceso Alcala, Agrarian Reform Secretary Virgilio de los Reyes, Philippine National Police Director General Alan Purisima and Budget Secretary Florencio Abad to restore the credibility of his reform program.

"The Aquino administration is losing moral high ground on the anticorruption issue. We cannot have double standard by condemning Vice President Jejomar Binay while tolerating administration allies involved in the [Janet Lim-]Napoles [pork barrel] scam and the [Disbursement Acceleration Program,

or DAP]. Double standard has a tremendously corrosive effect on civic morality,” Akbayan Rep. Walden Bello said in an interview with the Inquirer.

“Getting rid of Binay is only half the challenge facing the country. The other half is continuing the reform program,” Bello said.

“Unless the President gets rid of those around him who have compromised the reform agenda, it will continue to lose credibility. I can’t understand why these millstones around the President’s neck don’t have the [sense of propriety] to resign,” he added.

Like other Cabinet officials, Binay is undergoing a “performance audit” as presidential adviser on overseas Filipino workers and head of the Housing and Urban Development and Coordinating Council, Communications Secretary Herminio Coloma said on state-run radio.

“The President himself is the one evaluating his (Binay’s) effectiveness in this position and keeping his post is based on the President’s continued trust and confidence,” Coloma said.

So far, Aquino has not said that he has lost his trust and confidence in the Vice President, he added.

Corruption inquiry

A Senate blue ribbon subcommittee is investigating alleged corruption in Makati during Binay’s term as mayor of the city, including alleged overpricing of the P2.28-billion Makati City Hall Building II.

Former Makati Vice Mayor Ernesto Mercado, the principal witness in the investigation, has alleged that Binay pocketed kickbacks from municipal infrastructure projects and used dummies to conceal his ownership of an 8,877-square-meter real estate property in Comembo village in Makati and a 350-hectare agricultural farm in Rosario town, Batangas province.

Asked if the allegations against Binay could eventually affect the Aquino administration since the Vice President was a member of the Cabinet, Coloma pointed to how Binay was performing as housing chief and presidential adviser.

“These are areas where he is expected to perform his responsibilities as a member of the Cabinet,” Coloma said.

Aquino earlier asked members of his Cabinet to sign “commitment contracts” as a way of concretely evaluating their performance during a given period.

Some Cabinet officials, including Binay, failed to attend a recent Palace event where they were supposed to sign a “Cabinet performance pledge.”

In a previous interview, Coloma played down Binay’s absence, saying: “What is important is we understand the context of the event.”

“All agencies, all Cabinet-level departments are part of this process to commit under the concept of performance-based budgeting. The specific event of signing the contracts shows the personal commitment of the secretaries summarizing their commitment,” Coloma said.

Planning strategy

Presidential spokesman Edwin Lacierda earlier said the signing of “Cabinet performance contracts” was part of an “outcome-based planning strategy” meant “to reinforce the Cabinet secretaries’

commitment to the President and ensure the delivery of their agencies' priority programs and projects."

Among Cabinet officials, Transportation Secretary Joseph Emilio Abaya has been under fire, especially on social media, over worsening conditions in the country's mass transport system, particularly the Metro Rail Transit Line 3.

Bello has listed others whom he calls "trapos" (traditional politicians) masquerading as reformers.

First on his list was Abad, who was also the subject of his scathing complaint to Aquino in August that he reiterated to the President recently.

"I initially believed that the DBM (Department of Budget) secretary acted without malice but the baring of the list of congressional beneficiaries of the DAP floored me," Bello said.

The DAP was an economic stimulus fund that Abad put together using savings of different government agencies. The Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional on July 1.

Too much for tiny Batanes

"Not only [did] LP (Liberal Party) members running tight races and the administration's close allies [get] the lion's share [of the DAP], but Mr. Abad gave his wife (Batanes Rep. Henedina Abad) the sixth-largest allocation. Batanes is the smallest district with the smallest population and smallest number of registered voters, and Congresswoman Abad gets P177 million. This is outrageous," Bello said.

Bello noted that more than half of Batanes province's DAP allocation was made in the second half of 2012 and in the first half of 2013, or the height of the election campaign.

"The DAP funds made a difference in the outcome; she won by only 137 votes. That's bloody unfair, as the Brits would say," he said.

"I told the President that the congressional list opened the [DBM] chief to charges of nepotism, and I was really, really worried that would fatally wound the reform agenda, unless Abad left. The President said he would look into it," Bello said, adding that he was speaking for himself and not for Akbayan, which has several members in the Aquino administration.

Reached for comment, Abad said: "You don't prove those baseless allegations by press release."

Aside from Abad, Bello said it was time for the President to let go of De los Reyes to "straighten out" his agrarian reform legacy.

De los Reyes did not respond to the Inquirer's request for comment.

Two agri chiefs

On Alcala, Bello said he saw no point in having two de facto heads for the agriculture department (former Sen. Francis Pangilinan was appointed presidential adviser on national food security).

"This department is headed to the doldrums. It will simply bring about a fatal division of responsibility and accountability. It's the height of indecision. Why not give the fresh face full command?" Bello said.

Alcala said his stay in the Cabinet was all up to the President.

On Purisima, Bello said that while he considered the charges of unexplained wealth against the police chief serious, Purisima should be taken out for ineptitude in dealing with the law and order situation.

"It has really gone out of control, yet we have a somnambulist for a PNP chief, one who even tries to use statistics to deny the hard reality of rising criminality. The President should realize that the inability to contain crime erodes democracy, as it frightens the middle class to calling for authoritarian leadership," Bello said.

For Aquino's good

He said the President also needed to shake up his managers in transportation, energy and foreign affairs.

"People will not tolerate an economic policy that promotes growth whose benefits do not filter down to them. The reform program badly needs a rebooting and this means fresh faces in the Cabinet," Bello said.

"Those of us who really believe in the reform program have a stark choice: Either we get dragged down by the foolish, the corrupt and the inept in the ruling coalition, or we speak out and tell the truth, even if that may incur the President's displeasure. It's for his own good and that of his cherished bosses," he said.

* <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/648402/aquino-weighs-cabinet-members#ixzz3L7BZhrSs>
