

AKBAYAN condemns detention of journalists and civil society leaders

Sunday 2 December 2007, by [ABS-CBN](#), [Akbayan](#), [AVENDANO Christine](#), [LIM UBAC Michael](#), [PAPA Alcuin](#) (Date first published: 30 November 2007).

Dear Friends,

The six hour standoff at the luxury hotel in Makati city yesterday ended with the government's declaration of a "curfew" starting 12 midnight until 5 am., Friday in Metro Manila and nearby provinces. Please find herewith the report about the imposed "curfew".

We also have in this mailing, Akbayan's response to the arbitrary detention of mediamen and civil society leaders. Our hope is for our rule of law to be implemented in a just and peaceful manner.

Today, the Filipino citizens deserve to experience the sense of freedom and due process in all events and activities in the observance of Bonifacio day. Thank you very much.

In peace and solidarity,

International Committee

Akbayan! Citizen's Action Party

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PRESS RELEASE

29 November 2007

Akbayan Headquarters

AKBAYAN condemns detention of journalists and civil society leaders, warns govt against launching another crackdown

AKBAYAN Party condemned the arrest and rounding up of journalists and civil society leaders and warned the government today against using the Manila Pen stand-off to launch another crackdown against opposition, saying that it should instead face the issues that led to the stand-off squarely.

“The people will not tolerate another attack on democratic rights. The government is already insinuating that the stand-off is a conspiracy between civil society groups and the Magdalo soldiers, even making this insane accusation that the annual November 30 workers’ rallies is part of the stand-off,” Deputy minority leader and AKBAYAN Rep. Hontiveros said.

Rep. Hontiveros also condemned the arrest of Bishop Labayen and Fr. Robert Reyes. “The warrant of arrest for the Magdalo soldiers was issued for contempt of court. There was no legal basis to arrest and handcuff Bishop Labayen and Fr. Robert Reyes,” Rep. Hontiveros said.

For her part, AKBAYAN Chair Emeritus Etta Rosales said that the detention of journalists and confiscation of their equipments is isolating further an already politically discredited and a morally bankrupt administration. “We have to thank the soldiers and policemen who are detaining journalists and civil society leaders for showing the bankruptcy of the administration. This is bringing together various forces and sectors, making them realize that it depends upon them to change the status quo.”

“We will also push for a congressional inquiry on the violation of the rights of journalists who were simply in Manila Peninsula to do their jobs. It is unlawful for the AFP and PNP to detain these journalists and to confiscate the tapes and other properties of the media persons in the area,” Rep. Hontiveros added.

Rosales said that the conduct of the assault demonstrated anew the propensity of the GMA administration to resort to draconian measures to stifle dissent.

“GMA mangled our constitution and our laws to evade accountability and accused the Magdalo soldiers of violating the rule of law. Yet the stand-off was a product of the administration violating the rule of law – it resorted to pay-offs to escape allegations of fraud and corruption and it condoned extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances to stifle opposition,” Rosales said.

She warned the administration from using the stand-off to launch a crackdown against anti-GMA forces.

“She should instead come clean and allow efforts to hold her accountable for allegations of fraud and corruption. Declaring another state of emergency or martial rule would not be tolerated by the people. This has gone too far,” Rosales added.

Mediamen tagged, arrested as siege suspects

What was supposed to be a “by-the-book” arrest became a legal tug-of-war between the police and media outfits after officers arrested journalists and network crewmen alongside siege suspects Thursday.

Among those arrested, handcuffed with plastic cable ties and hauled off to the National Capital Region Police Office in Taguig City were 11 personnel of ABS-CBN News, including two correspondents.

Correspondent Pinky Webb said police at first threatened to arrest her and her cameraman if they

refused to surrender tapes of the standoff that ended shortly after 5 p.m.

Webb said that authorities wanted her team to go with the police to Bicutan for identification. Aside from the threat of being arrested, the video from Webb's team was also confiscated.

The video contained footage of Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV as he was about to leave the Manila Peninsula Hotel.

Webb added that they were told by police officials to "come now and ask questions later."

Correspondent Ces Drilon and her team were also arrested.

Technical crewmen of ABS-CBN News were also arrested, handcuffed and taken to a police bus bound for the NCRPO headquarters.

Among the technical crewmen arrested were Emil Hao, Alex Acuin, Mark Cadampog and Norbert Calupitan. Radio dzMM reporter Noel Alamar was also arrested.

Several journalists, who were unidentified as of posting time, were also taken to the police camp for questioning.

Rupert Ambil, a production unit manager for ABS-CBN, was among those arrested.

"Sabi po kailangan sumama (They told us to come with them)," said Ambil who said that his team was the last crew at the scene.

Defense chief defends arrests

Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro, meanwhile, defended the arrests of some members of the media who covered the takeover of Manila Peninsula Hotel.

Teodoro said that mediamen were taken into custody to verify if they really belong to a media organization. He said authorities received information that some renegade soldiers might pose as journalists.

He also assured that after the identities of those arrested are ascertained, they will be freed and allowed to bring in their lawyers.

"The rights of the persons under custody will be respected," he said.

He said that aside from media members, other civilians were also taken into custody.

"Maraming arresting officers. Maaaring iba hindi kilala iyong ibang media. We have to identify kung legitimate talaga o hindi (We have many arresting officers. It is possible that they did not recognize them)," he said.

Immediately after the mediamen were arrested, the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP) condemned the Philippine National Police who treated journalists covering the standoff as "enemies of the state".

"We protest in strongest terms the PNP's move to forcibly bring some journalists to the National Capital Region Police Office in Bicutan and condemn the confiscation of video footage of the day-long stand-off at the Manila Peninsula Hotel," the group said in a statement.

The NUJP likewise denounced the “overkill that led to the tying of the hands of members of ABS-CBN’s technical team and reporters” in what looked like a virtual arrest.

The group said it does not accept the explanation of Teodoro and police officials that the action was done to prevent the escape of Magdalo troops.

The group said police officials could easily verify the identities of the technical team with their news team superiors. He added that there was no reason why police officials would be ignorant of the identities of Webb, Drilon and members of the network’s technical team.

The group urged authorities to follow legal procedures and reminded them that “invitations to questioning should be differentiated from coercion; journalists have the option to accept the invitation and, certainly, should be accorded the basic right to counsel”.

Mediamen freed

Hours later, police released the teams from ABS-CBN and other mediamen held at the police camp.

Charie Villar, ABS-CBN’s head of newsgathering, went to the police camp with company lawyers to seek the release of network personnel.

She said that it was wrong for the police to arrest mediamen who were just doing their jobs.

Earlier, President Arroyo ordered the immediate release of journalists brought to the NCRPO headquarters for questioning as soon as it is proven that they should not be kept there.

Malacañang clarified that media personnel were not arrested but were brought to the police headquarters for “processing”.

“Technically that is not an arrest. That is a processing,” Interior and Local Government Secretary Ronaldo Puno said.

Suspects?

Senior Superintendent Asher Dolina, chief of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group in Metro Manila, said the journalists were brought to the police camp because some of them were considered suspects.

Other officials said they received information that some of the Magdalo soldiers that took part in the mutiny planned to pose as journalists to evade arrest.

Alamar, meanwhile, said there were only five policemen processing the journalists at the camp.

“Isang lamesa lang, mga limang pulis lang ang gumagawa doon. Ang dami namin mahigit sa kulang-kulang 100 yata kami doon sa loob, o mga 50 ganoon,” Alamar said when asked why they had to stay longer inside the camp.

(There was only one table, about five policemen working there. We were more or less 100 or 50 inside the camp.)

He said that the normal complaints he heard while he was being “processed” was about the plastic cable ties.

“Iyong reklamo iyong basta na lamang pinosasan, hindi man lang sinabi sa amin kung ano’ng

charges. Di ba iyong usual naman sa police iyong you have the right to remain silent, iyong Miranda doctrine, wala iyon. Basta dinala kami sa isang holding area, iyong makalabas lamang ng lobby ng Peninsula tapos pinosasan na kami sinakay na kami sa bus,” Alamar said.

(The usual complaint was that the police did not inform us of the charges. It should be part of the procedure for the police to tell you that you have the right to remain silent, the Miranda doctrine, however, it was not done. We were brought to a holding area, just outside the Peninsula lobby, handcuffed, then led to the bus.)

Maxim Uy, one of ABS-CBN’s lawyers, said all of the network’s personnel have been freed.

“Maayos naman ang trato sa media. Kinuha lang ang pangalan nila, address. Ganoon lang naman tapos sinabi naman ni General Barias pakakawalan na sila pagkatapos noon,” Uy said.

(Members of the media were treated well. Police just asked for their names, addresses. Then General Barias said they will be freed after that.)

Villa, meanwhile, shared stories from members of the production and technical crew of the network who were processed inside the camp.

They experienced maltreatment from the time they were asked to leave their camera positions in the hotel to the way their hands and wrists were bound by plastic cable ties.

“Iimbistigahan din natin no the way they investigated us. Kasi I heard some of them, iyung IDs nila hinila, pinadapa. I think that was uncalled for kasi may mga IDs na nga. They were hurt,” she said.

(We’ll investigate them the way they investigated us. I heard from some of them that their IDs were pulled violently, they were told to lie face down. I think that was uncalled for because they had IDs.)

“May iba sa kanila hinampas iyung kamay when they were raising their hands and marami rin ang pinadapa and some police also pointed their guns at our people,” she added.

(Some of them had their hands slapped when they were raising their hands and most were told to lie face down.)

Villa said the network is studying the possibility of filing charges against police officers who rounded up ABS-CBN personnel.

abs-cbnNEWS.com is the online news department of ABS-CBN Interactive Inc., an ABS-CBN subsidiary.

Manila Pen '50' transferred to Camp Crame

The personalities nabbed in Thursday night’s Manila Peninsula Hotel standoff, led by senator Antonio Trillanes IV and Maj. Gen. Danilo Lim, were transferred from the Camp Bagong Diwa in Bicutan to the maximum detention cell in Camp Crame Friday morning.

Two buses carrying around 50 people who joined the failed destabilization plot left Bicutan before 6

a.m. and arrived in Camp Crame in Quezon City minutes later.

Aside from neophyte senator and Lim, those arrested who holed out inside the hotel in Makati City were former vice president Teofisto Guingona, Bishop emeritus Julio Labayen of Infanta, Fr. Robert Reyes, and director Bibeth Orteza.

A handcuffed Guingona, clad in a black jacket, was the first to alight the bus. They were escorted to the Philippine National Police (PNP) Custodial Office.

On Thursday morning, Trillanes and Lim, along with other Magdalo soldiers being tried for the 2003 Oakwood Mutiny at the Makati court, walked out and seized the Manila Peninsula Hotel.

The group, joined by other civilians including Magdalo lawyers JV Bautista and Argee Guevarra, called for President Arroyo to step down for the alleged illegitimacy of the present administration.

Several journalists who were covering the incident inside the hotel including the ABS-CBN crew were also apprehended and brought to Camp Bagong Diwa for “processing.” They were released hours later.

Guevarra, in a phone interview, said aside from them Dr. Francisco Nemenzo, former University of the Philippines president, and columnist Herman Tui Laurel were also among those apprehended.

He decried police brutality as he claimed police officials, including Gen. Geary Barias, National Capital Region Police Office chief, hit Trillanes.

“Sen. Trillanes was manhandled last night. He was taken in. He was hit by a fist blow to his chest. He was elbowed,” Guevarra said.

Police Col. Anton Ricafort said the arrested people were already interrogated in Camp Bagong Diwa in Taguig City before they were turned over to the PNP Custodial Office.

PNP chief Director Gen. Avelino Razon Jr. said the group was transferred because there is no holding facility in Camp Bagong Diwa.

“They will be detained here temporarily while we are conducting an investigation,” he said.

Gov’t imposes curfew in Metro Manila, nearby provinces

By Michael Lim Ubac, Christine Avendaño, Alcuin Papa

Inquirer

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MANILA, Philippines — In a move that brought back memories of Ferdinand Marcos’ harsh rule, Malacañang on Thursday night imposed a midnight-to-dawn curfew in Metro Manila and surrounding provinces, hours after repelling another challenge to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s leadership.

Philippine National Police Director General Avelino Razon said the midnight-to-5 a.m. curfew would cover “all citizens,” except those responding to emergencies or who had valid reasons to be out of their homes during the night.

Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno said at a press conference the curfew would be implemented in Metro Manila and all the provinces, municipalities and cities in Central Luzon (Region 3) and Southern Tagalog (Region 4-a).

“Hopefully the curfew will be limited overnight, (or) one day,” said Puno.

The late dictator Marcos imposed a nationwide curfew when he proclaimed martial law in September 1972.

Malacañang invoked the “police power of the state” and announced the curfew shortly after repulsing a fresh challenge to the Arroyo presidency hurled by Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV, Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim and their supporters, who had occupied portions of the Manila Peninsula hotel in Makati City.

Puno said members of the media would be allowed to venture out into the streets as long as they presented valid identification cards.

People who have no business being in the streets in the wee hours of the morning should stay indoors, and public transport should also stop plying their routes, he said.

But delivery trucks can continue their operations, as well as commercial establishments that operate at night.

“We won’t enter establishments. Our curfew is only in the streets,” Puno said.

He said the government resorted to the measure to allow authorities to eliminate residual threats following the Makati standoff.

Puno was optimistic that authorities could finish by Friday its investigation, including identifying those involved in the “rebellion,” so that there would not be any need to extend the curfew.

“I hope that this is to be the last time that we’re going to be having to do with situations like this,” he said.

Local curfews

Puno said that depending on the outcome of operations, the government might re-impose the curfew Friday night.

“But my hunch is the curfew would be only until today,” he said at a Palace briefing.

Puno said Ms Arroyo authorized the curfew after “we requested” for its imposition to allow the police to do its follow-up operations.

Puno and Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said local governments and even barangays (villages) could impose curfews in their areas.

“But because of the magnitude and scope (of the situation), it needs the authority of the President,” Gonzalez said.

He said the government's move to impose the curfew was a "constitutional authority."

Puno said the PNP had been directed to issue the curfew guidelines as he sought the cooperation of the public.

More checkpoints

The PNP, he said, will put up checkpoints in areas affected by the curfew and those found travelling during the curfew will be subjected to "serious scrutiny."

"The curfew is for the safety of the citizens not to inconvenience them," Puno said. At one point, he said the curfew was a "necessary inconvenience."

He pledged that authorities would be "reasonable and respectful" and asked those who would be subjected to scrutiny to make sure they had proper identification and were not carrying weapons "because it would be an immediate reason for detention."

Puno discouraged bus and other transport owners from operating during the curfew time.

Asked why the curfew was also imposed in the regions outside Metro Manila, Puno said this was because Regions 3 and 4a were "closely linked" to Metro Manila and that the police authorities wanted to ensure that "the entire Metro Manila is safe and sound."

Message to the world

In a televised address, Ms Arroyo said in Filipino: "We have repeatedly proved to the world the stability of our democratic institutions and the strength of this government. Our strong Republic depends on a strong economy which the whole nation desires."

Ms Arroyo congratulated police enforcers, with the help of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, for the speedy resolution of the Peninsula hotel crisis.

"I have ordered that all residual threats should be eliminated, so that the rule of law and and peace and order can be effectively implemented," said Ms Arroyo.

Act of rebellion

Puno and Gonzalez described the Trillanes-Lim action as a "rebellion."

Ms Arroyo said no one should doubt the government's resolve to implement the rule of law.

"The prosecution of rebel soldiers will be pursued until its conclusion according to law," she said.

She disclosed that more charges were being readied against the rebel soldiers, among others.

Strangers in the night

Malacañang had insisted on ending the Peninsula standoff before nightfall.

"There are strangers in the night," Gonzalez quipped.

Gonzalez said it was a situation that "could ripen to a serious case" and that the Palace did not want this situation to escalate.

Gonzalez told reporters that Trillanes and Lim went to the hotel to "generate public support" so as

to eventually get support from the military “because no military action can win without public support.”

He said that Trillanes and Lim’s actions were connected with Friday’s planned mass protest actions by the militant Kilusang Makabansang Ekonomista, which had called on the people to turn their back against the “morally bankrupt government.”

Gonzalez said the government did not want the situation “to escalate.”

Others involved

National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales revealed he had received intelligence reports about a plan by “certain elements still entertaining” the idea of destabilizing the government.

Gonzales said these elements did not want to wait for the presidential election in 2010 and had planned to take action “this week.”

Among those said to be taking part in this alleged new destabilization attempt was Trillanes and that those involved numbered 15-20 individuals, including some “surprising names,” he said.

Asked who these surprising names were, Gonzales said he didn’t want to identify them but these were “decent people” and that they were not identified with either the government or the opposition.

He said Trillanes and Lim’s actions were “organized” and “planned.”

Caught off guard

“I feel bad about this. I might have failed to appreciate the significance of the (intelligence) report,” Gonzales said.

Asked why he did not take the report seriously, Gonzales said it was because it seemed unbelievable that a new destabilization attempt would be launched against the government when political parties were now holding conventions and preparing for the 2010 presidential campaign.

Although caught off-guard by the Trillanes-Lim action, Malacañang tried to downplay it. But they warned that the government would apply the full force of the law if the situation deteriorated.

“Let me just say we have faced a more serious situation before which we handled successfully,” said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye.

“The President appeared very cool and calm as she issued her directives,” Bunye said.

To prove that Ms Arroyo was convinced that authorities could contain the incident, Bunye said her official visit to Spain and United Kingdom from Dec. 2 to 7 would push through.

“That’s how confident we are,” Bunye said.

Visit cut short

Ms Arroyo had abruptly cut short her trip to Laguna province and hurried back to Malacañang by helicopter on learning of the Peninsula incident.

Ms Arroyo had just finished her speech at a security summit at Villa Escudero in San Pablo City,

announcing to her audience that she was heading next for the nearby Franklin Baker plant.

She never got to inspect the plant.

As her convoy was driving to the plant, news of the Peninsula incident broke.

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