



Action on Melo Report recommendations

- The Defense Department, Armed Forces of the Philippines to update provisions on command responsibility.
- The Department of Justice, Defense Department, Commission on Human Rights to constitute a Joint Fact-Finding body on alleged involvement of military personnel
- Justice Department to broaden, enhance Witness Protection Program
- Supreme Court to create Special Courts
- Request to European Union, Spain, Sweden, Finland, United Kingdom, Ireland, Italy, Germany, Netherlands for technical assistance, investigators
- Invitation to UN Special Rapporteur to assess situation

PALACE WELCOMES UN RAPPOREUR

Stressing that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is determined to put an end to extrajudicial killings and alleged human rights violations with the help of the international community, Malacanang welcomed today the arrival in the country of United Nations (UN) special rapporteur Philip Alston.

"We welcome the UN team to the Philippines in the spirit of truth and justice that President Arroyo has always stood for," Press Secretary and concurrent Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye said in a statement on 18 Feb 07.

"The President since the start has condemned these killings and has taken every means to get to their roots and bring the perpetrators to justice," he added.

President Arroyo, in a move to put a stop to extrajudicial killings, created in August last year the Melo Commission, a five-man fact-finding body to conduct an in-depth investigation of extrajudicial killings.

Last month, the Melo Commission submitted to the President its report and recommendations. Upon receipt of the report, the President immediately issued several directives,



Professor Philip Alston, UN Special Rapporteur on Extra-Judicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions will be conducting a 10 day visit to the Philippines to look into incidents of killings

among which is for the government to work with the church, activists, journalist and international community to strengthen the commission's findings and put more teeth into the recommendations.

While lamenting that the government efforts to put an end to extrajudicial killings were hampered by the lack of witnesses and cooperation of the victims' families and militant groups, Bunye expressed gladness that the

RP TO WORK CLOSELY, COOPERATE WITH UN

The government gave assurances that it would work closely with the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur Professor Philip Alston to be able to come up with a comprehensive and conclusive report on the roots of extrajudicial killings in the country.

Press Secretary and concurrent Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio R. Bunye said the UN Special Rapporteur's findings could help complete the Melo Commission report since the militant groups and relatives of the victims were reportedly cooperating with UN Special Rapporteur Philip Alston.

"We welcome the fact that the families of the victims of political killings are fully cooperating with the UN Special Rapporteur because this will complete the picture that the Melo Commission could not understandably achieve in view of the refusal of the families to testify before the probe body," Bunye said.

"The government intends to work closely with

the UN Special Rapporteur to get at the root of the matter, although we have held the first Melo report from distribution because it is still incomplete and, at this point, inconclusive," he added.

Bunye said that with the inputs from the UN and other sectors, including the church, government, activists, the journalists community, the Melo Commission could finally come up with a comprehensive report that could lead to a permanent resolution to all extrajudicial and political killings in the country.

"With the inputs of the UN and other well-meaning agencies, hopefully we can come up with a more comprehensive appreciation of the issue and undertake all means to resolve it permanently and close the book on it," he added.

In a related development, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said Malacanang could not release as yet the Melo Commission report since it is only a "preliminary report and is by

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PALACE WELCOMES (FROM P. 1)

UN team is "somewhat assured" of such cooperation as Alston was reportedly meeting with several activist groups in the country.

Bunye expressed confidence that the UN "probe will be objective as well as wide ranging, to include acts of murder and terror committed by the revolutionary left against their own kind."

"We support justice in all aspects and the government shall extend to the UN team all the assistance it needs to conduct a fruitful and fair search of the truth," he said.



Melo Commission led by former Supreme Court Justice Jose Melo (C) presides over the first hearing of the special commission

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GOVERNMENT TO WORK CLOSELY (FROM P. 1)

no means the comprehensive report."

Ermita was referring to the lack of testimonies from the militant groups and the victims' relatives.

"So at the moment, we have to await the final report because the President has asked the Melo Commission to continue with its work and

hope we can still urge the leftist organizations to participate so that the Melo Commission would have a good basis in the valuation of their findings," Ermita said.

The President, upon receipt of the Melo Commission's report last Jan. 30, issued several directives that would put more teeth to the Com-

mission's recommendations "We want a wider, deeper understanding that will involve more cooperation from all concerned parties and sectors," the President said as she called on the relatives, witnesses and the militant groups to speak out and lay the evidence so justice could be served.

The recommendations of the initial Melo report have been ordered implemented by President Arroyo and are now part of our uncompromising effort to stop these killings permanently.

Press Secretary Bunye



FROM THE CORNER OF MASSACHUSETTS AND BATAAN

Even before the arrival of UN Special Rapporteur Philip Alston, President Arroyo had already set in motion key decisions aimed at addressing the issue of unlawful killings.

Very early on, the President decided that this was an issue she would openly discuss, whether with other governments, as she did with the EU, or with NGOs and civil society, as she did with Amnesty international.

The President subsequently im-

plemented the recommendations of the Melo Commission.

She then welcomed the visit of Professor Alston, who came upon the invitation of the government.

The President has pledged that her government will cooperate with all those sincerely intending to help us solve this pressing problem.

These are the actions of a government and a leadership that is determined to effectively address the issue of unlawful killings.

In response to our openness and our clear willingness to cooperate, it is our hope that others will come to understand our determination to address this issue, to bring the perpetrators to justice and to eradicate this scourge.

It is also our hope that with the inputs of the UN and other well-meaning agencies and governments, the Philippine Government will be able to implement a comprehensive plan of action

that would find a meaningful and lasting solution.

In this task, the judiciary will be an important partner.

The Supreme Court has promptly responded to the President's request to explore the feasibility of creating special courts for the trial of cases involving political/ideologically motivated killings.

Limited resources are also being realigned so that this problem receives immediate attention and action on the side of the Philippine judicial system.

Hopefully, the Filipino people and the global community would in time be able to appreciate the sincere efforts being undertaken by the Philippine Government to solve this problem.

Viewed in the context of the many other challenges faced by the Government, these actions show that the Government is clearly on the right path in its quest to end these unlawful killings.

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