

DOJ drops kidnapping rap vs. lawyer in Sagay massacre

MANILA -- The Department of Justice (DOJ) junked a kidnapping case against a lawyer who assisted the mother of a minor who survived the Sagay massacre in Negros Occidental.

"We find no probable cause to charge Atty. Katherine Panguban of kidnapping and serious illegal detention," Sagay City Acting City Prosecutor Ferdinand O. Fernandez said in a resolution dated June 17 and released to newsmen Friday.

The prosecutor said there is no kidnapping or serious illegal detention as the minor victim, Victor Cabahug, was taken from the custody of his biological father, Vic Pedaso, and given to his mother, Florderliza Cabahug.

The DOJ also faulted Pedaso, who prosecutors pointed out as someone who "filed a missing person report despite knowing that his son was in the custody of his mother."

The justice department said it was Florderliza who sought the help and assistance of Panguban.

The child, the prosecutor pointed out, freely chose to be with his biological mother.

Government lawyers earlier said they may hold a preliminary investigation hearing next month in Negros Occidental in connection with the Sagay massacre case.

Assistant State Prosecutor Ferdinand Fernandez noted that none of the respondents appeared on the

last scheduled hearing at the DOJ office in Manila.

Fernandez said the respondents had trouble traveling to Manila to attend the preliminary investigation.

Nine members of the National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW) were killed inside Hacienda Nene in Sagay City, Negros Occidental on the night of Oct. 20, 2018.

Authorities have filed murder complaints against those suspected to be involved in the massacre, including Rene Manlangit and Rogelio Arquillo.

The victims were allegedly enticed to join the NFSW and were manipulated by the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People's Army. (PNA)

PRRD didn't commit impeachable offense over Chinese in PH waters

MANILA -- Malacañang believes that President Rodrigo Duterte did not commit an impeachable offense because he never allowed Chinese to fish within Philippines' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the first place.

Presidential Spokesperson Salvador Panelo insisted that it was "speculative" to assume that the Chinese vessel which allegedly rammed and abandoned a Filipino fishing boat in the Recto Bank (Reed Bank) was indeed fishing in the area when it could have merely been passing through.

"Under the Constitution, merong (there are) provisions on impeachment. Kung naniniwala sila na may ginawa siyang impeachable ground, e di mag-file (if they believe that he did something impeachable ground, then, they should file a case)," Panelo said in a Palace briefing on Thursday.

"But you cannot stop the President from doing

measures, steps that to his mind is the correct way to obey the Constitutional command to him to protect and to serve the Filipino people," he added.

Critics including former Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert del Rosario earlier warned that allowing Chinese to fish in territorial waters violates the 1987 Constitution.

Del Rosario said Duterte's failure to defend the country's territory, including the EEZ, violates the Constitution and is a basis for impeachment.

Following calls of Filipino fishermen for the President to ban Chinese from fishing within Philippine waters, Panelo said Duterte saw no need to prevent them from doing so.

Panelo clarified that Duterte trusts China would not allow their nationals to fish within the country's 200-nautical mile EEZ since the two countries consider each other as "friends."

"It is not necessary to prevent them from fishing

because they will not do that. In other words, why should I prevent somebody to do something he is not going to do that?" Panelo said.

On Monday, Duterte himself was quoted saying: "I don't think that China would do that (fish within Philippine EEZ). Why? Because we're friends."

Constitutional
Panelo defended Duterte following concerns that entering into a mutual agreement with Chinese President Xi Jinping on fishing rights without the concurrence of Congress is unconstitutional.

"Ano ba ang constitutional doon sa napag-usapan nila na wag magkagulo doon sa isang lugar. Kasi tandaan ninyo (What's unconstitutional about agreeing to prevent conflict in the area. Because remember) this is a disputed territory," Panelo said.

Duterte earlier admitted the Philippines could not stop China from fish-

Karapatan misrepresenting anew in Red's cadaver retrieval

MANILA -- Asister of slain New People's Army (NPA) leader, Bonifacio Magramo, on Wednesday expressed her outrage against militant human rights group Karapatan-Southern Tagalog for allegedly using foul tactics to recover the remains of her brother from military custody.

Lornabeth M. Galos said their family had long been wishing to see Bonifacio alias "Eboy" because they have not located him since he joined the ranks of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP)-NPA.

"We are hoping that we will be able to see him one last time before we bury him," Lornabeth said in the vemaclar.

She said news of her brother's death came late and the latter's daughter was prevented from going to Mindoro to attend to his father's remains.

"Tinawagan umano ito ng mga kasamahang NPA ni Magramo sa Palawan at binantaan na wag nang puntahan ang bangkay ng ama (Her nephew received a call from his father's NPA comrade in Palawan and warned not to recover his remains)," Galos added.

Magramo, a resident of Sablayan, Occidental Mindoro, is a known NPA leader as Secretary of Sub-Re-

gional Military Area, 4E in Palawan. He was killed along with two other communist rebels during a clash with government troops in Panaytayan, Mansalay, Oriental Mindoro on June 13.

It can be recalled that a team from Karapatan went to the Mansalay Police Station in an attempt to claim the body of the rebel leader. Karapatan reportedly insisted that they were accompanying a certain Jessica Baes Alcos, daughter of the slain rebel leader.

The militant group initially identified Magramo as Victor Alcos, an NPA fighter based in Batangas.

Police had no choice but to release the body to the group for burial despite their reservations on the alleged claimant and Karapatan's motives.

However, subsequent investigations revealed that Karapatan and Jessica's claim were false as Alcos has been killed in a clash with military troops last year.

Police said the Magramos now have the right to recover the remains of their family member from Karapatan once the DNA testing conducted by the Philippine National Police-Scene of the Crime

Operation conclusively proves that the body is Bonifacio's, and not Alcos'.

Meanwhile, Karapatan's underhand tactics and harassment against local authorities prompted residents of Mansalay and Roxas City in Oriental Mindoro to conduct their own peace rally to counter Karapatan's protest actions.

"The main objective was to disrupt the process and expedite the claim of Magramo's remains to conceal the fact that a ranking NPA commander was killed in the (June 13) encounter," said one of the rallyists.

He said that after Kaparatain members were able to claim the three remains of NPA members, they shouted "Mabuhay ang Bagong Hukbong Bayan (Long live New People's Army)!"

According to Lt. Col. Alexander Arbolado, Army's 4th Infantry Battalion commander, the Lornabeth's surfacing only proves that Karapatan is using "dirty tricks" in defending the NPAs.

"Hindi rin natin maiaalis ang posibilidad na ginamit lang ng Karapatan ang pamilya Alcos upang papaniwalain sila na ang nasabing bangkay ay si

Victor Alcos (We cannot discount the possibility that Karapatan is only using the Alcos family to convince the Magramos that the cadaver is that of Victor Alcos, not Bonifacio's)," Arbolado said.

Meanwhile, 203rd Infantry Brigade commander, Brig. Gen. Marceliano Teofilo, urged all residents to fight and resist the CPP-NPA so that peace can finally reign in Mindoro.

"Do not allow yourself to fall prey to the sweet words of Karapatan as this only cause trouble like what they did in the past days in Mansalay," he added.

Brig. Gen. Elias H. Escarcha, commander of the Army's 2nd Infantry Division, vowed slain of tight security measures in the region.

"Gagawin namin ang lahat upang mapigilan ang anumang banta ng terorismo o pananakot na dulot ng NPA o sinumang makakaliwang grupo (We will do everything we can to thwart terrorism threats of the NPA and its allies)," Escarcha said.

Joint military and police forces have launched a manhunt operation against remnants of the slain leader's group operating in Mindoro. (PNA)

anniversary of the Presidential Security Group (PSG) at Malacañang Park on Wednesday (June 26) night.

Panelo, however, said Philippine government will prosecute the Chinese crew if proven that they were fishing within Philippine waters.

"Then we will enforce the law. If it's unlawful for them to enter, then we will enforce the law," Panelo said.

"Basta violation ng batas (As long as it is a violation of the law), under our jurisdiction, we will prosecute," the Presidential Chief Legal Counsel added. (PNA)