



STATEMENT OF PROTEST AGAINST PRESIDENT DUTERTE'S REMARKS INCITING VIOLENCE TOWARDS CATHOLIC BISHOPS

Does Duterte really want some Catholic bishops killed?

Wishing the death of certain persons you hate is normal for some people although it is admittedly a disordered human emotion.

But when the powerful president of a nation publicly expresses his private wish at an official function at his seat of power, it becomes more than a wish. It becomes an unofficial order - an order that carries the same persuasive force though not a presidential decree and lacks the official seal of his office.

What distinguishes an unofficial presidential order from an official one? From an executory point of view, an official decree makes the issuer of the decree accountable and culpable. On the other hand, an unofficial decree can have the same persuasive effect but it leaves the issuer of the decree legally unaccountable. He can escape responsibility for it by simply saying that he was just joking when he said it. For that, he may get a mere slap on the wrist.

What exactly did President Duterte say? Where and when did he say it?

According to an Inquirer news report (05 December 2018), Duterte said in his speech at Malacanan during the awarding ceremonies for the 2017 Presidential Award for Childfriendly Municipalities and Cities:

"Itong mga Obispo ninyo, patayin ninyo. Walang silbi iyang mga gagong iyan. All they do is criticize"

This is totally opposite what he said some 2 years ago in another public speech:

"Do not hesitate to attack me, criticize me if I do wrong in my job. It is your duty to your country," he told reporters at a press conference.

As president, he is the chief public servant and should be open to criticism from the people he serves and should appreciate the inputs of the moral guardians like the bishops who share responsibility with him in upholding the moral atmosphere of the society we live in.

Now that the bishops have warned the public about the serious perils of shifting to Federalism amid their ongoing concern for the life, liberty and rights of the Filipino people, the President makes a public death wish for these bishops. A death wish it is! The events of the past two years have shown that some in the police force and unknown

vigilantes have acted on the President's public statements encouraging the killing without mercy of those poor people who are suspected to be drug pushers.

Will the same policemen and vigilantes take the President seriously and kill the Catholic bishops to please him because he labels these bishops as "gago at walang silbi" and for criticizing the President? Hasn't Duterte put at serious risk the lives and effectiveness of the Catholic bishops?

Mr. Duterte cannot be speaking as our president when he uttered those words. We condemn such barbaric statement. Consuming fentanyl and marijuana do not justify such a misconduct most especially from the highest elected official of this Christian nation. Our Christian faith demands that we speak out and call our leaders to task:

1. We ask Mr. Duterte to apologize to our bishops and to our whole nation unequivocally for having issued such a barbaric statement.
2. We ask both houses of Congress to officially censure the President and to assure the Filipino people of protection especially when we issue dissenting opinions in a democratically-acceptable way.
3. We ask the leadership of the military and police establishments to assure the public of protection of our lives, liberty and human rights as we exercise our Godgiven options and constitutional freedom especially as we approach the mid-term 2019 elections and the crucial issue on Federalism.

We make this statement respectfully as freedom-loving Filipinos and morally-committed Christians. We speak not only out of loyalty, love and respect for our bishops but to safeguard the liberty and morality of the Filipino nation for which we sing with patriotic ardor ". . . ang mamatay nang dahil sa 'yo.'"

In behalf of the FTJP,



Dennis C. Castillo
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8 December 2018