



Joint Press Statement

18 August 2011

PUSH ELECTORAL REFORMS NOW TO PROTECT VOTES IN THE FUTURE

Recent events—the resignation of Senator Juan Miguel Zubiri, the assumption to the Senate of Aquilino “Koko” Pimentel III after winning his four-year-old electoral protest at the Senate Electoral Tribunal, the surfacing of former Commission on Elections provincial election supervisor Lintang Bedol and former Comelec commissioner Virgilio Garcillano—have brought electoral anomalies of the past back to the center of public attention, providing us an excellent opportunity to address unresolved electoral issues with an eye towards introducing and implementing reforms to protect votes in future elections.

The resignation of Mr. Zubiri and the subsequent proclamation of Mr. Pimentel confirm what many had already suspected in 2007—that electoral irregularities had a material effect on the senatorial election’s results. While some may consider the matter closed after the Senate Electoral Tribunal released the results of its investigation confirming the true count of the 2007 electoral exercise, in fact we should delve deeper into how these anomalies occurred and who was responsible for them.

At the same time, the reappearance of Lintang Bedol and Virgilio Garcillano provides the Comelec an opportunity to investigate what really happened in the 2004 elections, particularly in some provinces of Mindanao, which were at the heart of the “Hello Garci” tapes. One may recall that even the Administration at that time indicated that the tapes were real. Such an investigation should focus on how the irregularities were perpetrated and identifying the perpetrators, regardless of the final outcome of the elections.

We welcome the formation by the Department of Justice and Comelec of the joint panel that will investigate allegations of the rigging of election results in 2004 and 2007. The DOJ and Comelec must ensure that a thorough, transparent, and impartial probe be undertaken so that the restoration of the people’s trust in our electoral processes can begin.

While it may be too late to turn back the clock for some who had been unjustly deprived of their rightful electoral mandate, it is not too late to correct the problems and undertake the reforms that will ensure that these electoral anomalies do not occur again in the future.

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