

## **Cracks in the justice system**

Written by Editor-in-chief  
Saturday, 05 March 2011 11:23

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**FOR the first time in Philippine judicial history, an officer of the court, the Ombudsman, is headed to an impeachment trial for allegedly protecting former President and now Pampanga Rep. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and her family in connection with pending and unacted high-profile corruption cases filed against them.**

**By a majority vote, the House judiciary committee found sufficient grounds, both in form and substance, to recommend the impeachment of Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez to the full membership for plenary vote.**

**Passage is imminent because the House is controlled by a majority which supports the initiative.**

**Two-thirds, or about 94 of more than 200 congressmen, is needed to send the impeachment complaint to the Senate for trial.**

**Most of the 23 senators who will serve as judges are allied with President Benigno Aquino III, who has vowed to eliminate graft and corruption in government service.**

**Whether she will be acquitted or found guilty, she will go down in history as the first ranking constitutional official to be tried for alleged betrayal of public trust and willful violation of the Constitution.**

**For the record, former President Joseph Estrada was haled to an impeachment trial in the Senate for similar infractions, but the trial was aborted after government prosecutors abruptly walked out of the trial leading up to a people uprising and his removal from office.**

**He was subsequently convicted by the Sandiganbayan for plunder and sentenced to life in prison, but was later pardoned by President Arroyo who succeeded him by virtue of a vacuous Supreme Court resolution that he “constructively resigned” from office.**

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**The beleaguered Ombudsman is mounting a vigorous defense and denying the charges levelled against her.**

**She will ask the Supreme Court to stop Congress from going after her, although the High Court already authorized the House committee to proceed with its work.**

**It's possible the Supreme Court might reverse itself again, as it did in other cases, including exonerating one of its members who was found to have plagiarized the works of legal authorities and adopted them, word for word and without attribution, in one of his decisions.**

**A former Chief Justice narrowly averted being impeached in connection with the Judicial Development Fund after the 8th Congress dismissed the complaint.**

**Public esteem of the flip-flopping High Court is at a new low.**

**“You know, one can't help but wonder what is happening to the Supreme Court,” bewailed Justice Secretary Leila de Lima who recited a laundry list of alleged judicial improprieties.**

**If you can't trust the Supreme Court anymore, where else can the oppressed citizens turn to?**