

## Lawmakers support Christmas furlough for Gloria Arroyo

Written by Administrator

Monday, 16 December 2013 18:32

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MANILA — About 70 administration and opposition lawmakers have signed a resolution asking the Sandiganbayan to allow former President and now Pampanga Rep. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (pictured above) a furlough this Christmas.

Rep. Silvestre Bello III of 1-BAP Party List and author of House Resolution 537, said he presented his measure at the meeting of the justice committee and this would be tackled in the next hearing.

“I made it clear (before the committee) that I filed the resolution not because Rep. Arroyo is a former president or a former vice president or a former senator, I filed that resolution out of Christian charity and out of humanitarian and compassionate considerations,” Bello told reporters.

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He said Arroyo, who is detained at the Veterans Memorial Medical Center (VMMC) in Quezon City on plunder charges, is still presumed innocent until proven guilty.

He recalled when he was justice secretary during the Ramos administration, he would sometimes allow some convicts a leave to attend to urgent personal matters, like the burial of a close relative.

“Is that unprecedented? No. And this is not a demand but an appeal to the honorable justices of the Sandiganbayan,” Bello said.

Minority Leader San Juan City Rep. Ronaldo Zamora said the resolution was intended to show Arroyo that she is not forgotten by her colleagues.

“She may be absent but she was not out of mind,” Zamora said.

Meanwhile, Ferdinand Topacio, a lawyer of former First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, blasted the Philippine National Police (PNP) for a new directive prohibiting his client from staying overnight at the hospital suite where his wife is detained.

Topacio called the PNP directive “most unchristian and most unkind, especially so coming during the holidays when ties of family and friendship become more pronounced in keeping with the season.

Reports said police personnel detailed to guard the former president no longer allow her husband to spend the night with her at the hospital and have also reduced the time allowed for her to go out of her room for some sun.

Arroyo now also cannot attend mass at the VMMC chapel.

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Masses can only be held inside her hospital suite.

The PNP defended the policy, saying uniform rules govern all detained persons undergoing court litigation.