

Noy welcomes Suu Kyi's release, hopes other detainees will be freed

Written by Administrator

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AUNG SAAN SUU KYI

MANILA — President Benigno Aquino III joined other world leaders in welcoming the release of pro-democracy leader Aung Saan Suu Kyi by the Myanmar military junta and called for the immediate release of her fellow political detainees.

Mr. Aquino said the release of other political leaders would be a more welcome development and a “positive step in the direction towards democracy.”

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"I encourage Myanmar's Government to build upon the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and take concrete steps toward a more open and fair system, efforts which will be surely welcomed by the rest of the international community," Mr. Aquino said in a statement.

He said that other Myanmar political prisoners have not been freed and the elections on Nov. 7 have not been viewed as credible and "it is still unclear if there are conditions attached to her (Suu Kyi's) release."

It is now imperative that Myanmar takes bolder and clearer steps that would pave the way for a democratic system, "in the interest of its people" and the "long-term stability" of the Asian region.

Suu Kyi was released after the Nov. 7 general elections in Myanmar, the first polls in 20 years.

Leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), along with Mr. Aquino, have earlier called on Myanmar Prime Minister Thien Sein to release Suu Kyi, but Myanmar officials said that there is still a process by which the activist may be freed.

Presidential Communications Group Secretary Ricky Carandang said the Myanmar leader explained to Mr. Aquino that election procedures were in place following the creation of an election commission by the junta-ruled nation, with the assurance that poll results would be "free and fair."

"The Myanmar leader said the legal processes would take their course. It is disappointing not just for the Philippines but to the international community as well. We have expressed our willingness to share our history and the successful transition that happened," he said.

"The lack of commitment on that (Aung San Suu Kyi) was disappointing to the President," Carandang added. The Myanmar leader thanked Mr. Aquino for his concern, "but at the same time, he told him (Mr. Aquino) that they also have a roadmap to democracy."

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Mr. Aquino and Vietnamese President Nguyen Minh Triet have earlier joined mounting calls for the Myanmar military junta to release Suu Kyi in time for the country's Nov. 7 national elections.

"We have been championing the cause of Madam Aung San Suu Kyi for a very, very long time. The basic premise is stability (in) one of the member states of the ASEAN...leads to stability within ASEAN," he said.

Mr. Aquino, son of the late President Corazon Aquino and Sen. Benigno Aquino Jr., whose fight against the late President Ferdinand Marcos led to the restoration of democracy in 1986, said his heart goes out to Suu Kyi.

"Next year will be the 25th anniversary of our own people power revolution. We succeeded in a transition that is relatively peaceful. So, we will just remind them of certain promises that were made quite a number of years back," he said.

Carandang, who was present at the meeting of the two heads of state, said Mr. Aquino and the Vietnamese leader have agreed that Myanmar should do more to move toward democracy.

Speaker Feliciano Belmonte Jr. welcomed the release Suu Kyi whom he described as an icon of the whole world.

He said that she was released after the elections that were controlled by the military junta in Myanmar.

"I'm very happy," Belmonte said in a telephone interview.