



San Beda Law dean: Congress quiz of NBN-ZTE case must defer to Ombudsman, DOJ probe

MANILA, Feb. 17 (*PinoyGlobal*) - Only the Ombudsman and the Department of Justice (DOJ) have prosecutorial powers among government agencies, something that Congress does not possess despite its constitutional task of oversight. This was pointed out by Fr. Ranhilio Callangan Aquino, dean of the Graduate School of San Beda College, who stressed in an open letter, thus: “If what we wish – and that is what I ardently wish – is that the guilty be brought to justice, then the bodies that are vested by law with prosecutorial power, such as the Office of the Ombudsman and the Department of Justice, should with due enthusiasm, transparency, efficiency and expeditiousness investigate the case...”

This, added Fr. Aquino, will ensure that “those in whom criminal or administrative liability is found may be dealt with as the law ordains, and those against whom no fault can be established may be cleared of all aspersions of doubt and infamy.” Fr. Aquino further stressed that the much-touted Senate testimony of Rodolfo Lozada Jr. about the long-canceled ZTE broadband contract has not in any way pointed to the doorsteps of the Presidency.

“I cannot... join my voice to the calls for the President’s resignation – or perhaps even forcible ouster from office. What has Mr. Lozada said that establishes the culpability of the President?” asked Fr. Aquino in his letter. “I have followed the proceedings unfold before the nation through national television. I have listened intently to his testimony in answer to the questions asked, many of the latter rambling and incoherent!” exclaimed the San Beda Law dean who stressed, thus: “I fail to see the connection between Mr. Lozada’s statements and what I consider precipitous calls for the President’s resignation.”

Fr. Aquino added that “evicting an elective official from office – particularly the President – circumvents the demands of rational discourse,” pointing out that “public and political will-formation takes place through discourse, the assumption being that people are willing to be persuaded by the force of the better argument. I hope that this is true of us all, including those now massed at Makati, he said (referring to the mass action along Ayala Avenue in Makati City last Friday, Feb. 15).

“I opt for rational discourse. We should be mature; we can be mature!” stressed Fr. Aquino even as he clarified that “my views are mine and should not be imputed on San Beda College.”

At the same time, the San Beda Law dean admired Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Chairman Romulo Neri for the latter’s equanimity in reacting to last Friday’s protesters: “I applaud (Chairman) Neri for his calm and for his courtesy. He showed himself a true gentleman, and conducted himself in a scholarly manner... I am appalled at the way (Chairman) Neri was badgered by one who held himself out as an advocate of truth... The person who forced him to ‘tell the truth now’ never said by what right or title of office he demanded of Chairman Neri the truth,” stressed Fr. Aquino who concluded, thus: “We are capable of mature and rational conduct. In this respect, I have not lost faith.” #

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