

Philippines - Resignation speech of Walden Bello as Akbayan party-list Rep.: Aquino can 'scratch me off his list of allies'

Thursday 12 March 2015, by [BELLO Walden](#) (Date first published: 11 March 2015).

Walden Bello resigned as Akbayan representative over the President's handling of the Mamasapano crisis. He was supposed to deliver this speech - his last as Akbayan representative - on Wednesday, March 11, but purportedly due to lack of quorum, the House adjourned.

'The President, unfortunately, has a problem listening to people. When it comes to constructive criticism and suggestions, he is tone deaf.'

Let me just begin by saying that as late as Sunday, I did not expect to be standing here to give the speech I am about to give.

For me, Monday, March 9, 2015, when the President made his latest public intervention on the Mamasapano tragedy [1], will go down as a dark day in my political life, much like January 25.

During the last few weeks, we have seen how the Mamasapano encounter has shaken the foundations of the administration.

Many of those who consider themselves allies of the President have witnessed how the legacy of reforms initiated by the administration has been threatened by the manner in which the President has handled the question of responsibility. We have been especially concerned by the threat posed to the Bangsamoro Basic Law by the deadly questions surrounding the fatal mission that resulted in the deaths of 44 SAF policemen, 18 Bangsamoro militants, and 4 civilians.

Unfortunately, an already tragic event has been made worse by President Aquino's response to the national clamor for the truth about Mamasapano.

The President seemed more interested in expressing his regret at the resignation of Gen Alan Purisima as PNP chief than at getting at the truth. He consistently avoided the question of command responsibility for the mission and its consequences. He invited members of the House [2], ostensibly to talk to them, about saving the Bangsamoro Basic Law, but in reality to convince them that he was "fed lies" by his 2 subordinates on the hourly developments in the SAF mission.

I did not expect that our colleagues who were present in that meeting to fall for the President's story, and they did not. The President, unfortunately, has a problem listening to people. When it comes to constructive criticism and suggestions, he is tone deaf.

Last November, when I asked him to fire General Purisima, Secretary of the Budget Abad, Secretary of Agriculture Alcala, and Agrarian Reform Secretary Virgilio de los Reyes, on the grounds that they were ruining the administration's credibility as a force for reform, he got angry and said I should run for president so I could run the country the way I wanted [3].

Two weeks ago, when I asked Malacañang to stop managing the flow of information about Mamasapano, his spokesperson Ms. Abigail Valte responded by telling me to ask myself if I still considered myself an "ally of the President."

On Monday, the President dismissed people like me, who are raising hard questions about Mamasapano as "KSP," or *kulang sa pansin* (attention-seekers) [4].

It seems that the President's idea of an ally is someone who follows Malacañang's line without question and without hesitation. It seems that any ally raising legitimate questions and criticisms is seen as sleeping with enemy.

Nothing, however, prepared me for the President's remarks two days ago, when he placed all the blame for the failed mission on General Napeñas, exonerating his buddy Gen Purisima and himself, defending, in advance, Purisima and himself from 3 possible findings of responsibility and guilt on their part by the report of the Board of Inquiry of the PNP on the Mamasapano encounter.

Scratch me off

Mamasapano is a deadly acid eating at the presidency.

Now the President is engaging in a brazen cover-up of his responsibility and that of his trusted aide Purisima. This is the latest development in the shrinking of a man I once admired from a credible president to a small-minded bureaucrat trying desperately to erase his fingerprints from a failed project to save his own skin.

This man, I must conclude sadly, knows nothing of command responsibility or of honor.

The President's latest move leaves me with no choice.

As I said earlier, Ms. Valte last week asked if I still considered myself an ally of the President.

Let me say, Mr. Chair, that given the President's thoroughly unpresidential move of disclaiming any responsibility for Mamasapano, he can scratch me off his list of allies.

I am withdrawing my support for President Aquino.

Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for the leadership of my party Akbayan. In recent months, however, differences have cropped up between me and the leadership over the issue of the party's continuing support for the President.

My declaration of non-support for the administration today conflicts with a fundamental party position. Given our code of conduct as a progressive party, owing to this fundamental difference, it is neither right nor appropriate for me to continue representing the party in the House of Representatives.

Thus I have voluntarily tendered my irrevocable decision to step down as congressional representative to the party leadership. I have a few more tasks to finish in the next few days, before I vacate my position on March 19, including heading up a mission to investigate the condition of our

overseas workers in Hong Kong this coming weekend.

However, since this is most likely to be my last privilege speech, please allow me a few words that may border on the sentimental and nostalgic. Let me just say that I have learned a great deal from my colleagues during my six-year stint in the House. Some of us may have been on opposite sides on a number of issues, but for the most part, we have treated each other with the courtesy and respect that governs our behavior in the House.

Requests

I really appreciate this collegiality, although I will never regret the act that led to a charge of violating parliamentary courtesy in the Committee on Ethics during the 15th Congress – something I am happy to disclose to those members who were not here to witness that memorable event. I have formed friendships on both sides of the aisle, and I plan to keep and nurture these when I have left these august halls.

I thank our good Speaker Sonny Belmonte not only for his political leadership but also for the care and solicitousness he manifested for my wife's health and recovery. I very much value my having worked with the Speaker, Majority Leader Neptali Gonzales II, and the rest of the House leadership. Of course, one must not forget to extend one's deepest gratitude to Secretary General Marilyn Barua-Yap and the very hardworking staff of the House of Representatives.

If my colleagues in both the administration and opposition may entertain some requests from a departing friend, let me make the following: Please pass the Bangsamoro Basic Law. Please reopen the House investigation on the Mamasapano tragedy. Kindly pass the amendment to the CARPER agrarian reform extension law. And, finally, finally, please pass the Freedom of Information Bill.

Thank you very much, and *mabuhay kayong lahat*.

Walden Bello

P.S.

* Rappler.com. Published 6:26 PM, Mar 11, 2015. Updated 8:17 PM, Mar 11, 2015:
<http://www.rappler.com/thought-leaders/86517-bello-resignation-speech-aquino>

Footnotes

[1] <http://www.rappler.com/nation/86259-mamasapano-aquino-napenas>

[2] <http://www.rappler.com/nation/84830-aquino-purissima-espina-mamasapano>

[3] <http://www.rappler.com/nation/73889-aquino-bello-complaints>

[4] <http://www.rappler.com/nation/86395-aquino-critics-attention-seekers>