

**Hold the Arroyo regime liable for the illegal arrest and detention
of Anakpawis Rep. Crispin Beltran and rising state suppression of civil liberties**
Anakpawis National Executive Committee
February 25, 2006

Anakpawis partylist, its National Executive Committee, its regional, provincial, and municipal chapters, and constituents, condemns in the strongest terms, the illegal arrest and detention of Anakpawis Representative and Chairperson Crispin Beltran by elements of the Criminal Intelligence and Detention Group (CIDG) of the Philippine National Police (PNP) at around 10 in the morning today.

We condemn this abominable act of political repression directed against a legislator who has ably and consistently represented the interests and aspirations of the toiling masses for social change, through legislation such as those advocating wage increases for workers and employees in the private and public sectors, and through supporting the broad and justified calls for President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's removal from the Palace.

The CIDG, under the pretense of 'inviting [Rep. Beltran] for questioning', has illegally arrested, detained, and treacherously violated Congressman Beltran's rights to immunity from arrest when PNP elements led by a certain Maj. Rene Corpuz accosted Ka Bel, his wife Rosario, and four other companions, in the vicinity of Ka Bel's residence in Muzon, Bulacan and 'escorted' them to Camp Crame.

As of this afternoon, Ka Bel remains in the custody of the CIDG under charge of inciting to rebellion. This questionable warrant of arrest—which the CIDG failed to procure at first, and instead, presented while Ka Bel's was squarely in the hands of the PNP—is based on previously-quashed charges of inciting to rebellion filed against Ka Bel during the Marcos regime. These charges have been nullified under the Aquino administration and hold no legal basis at present.

The arrest of Crispin Beltran is therefore illegal and without basis with regards to the charges made. The PNP has furthermore no right to hold Congressman Beltran for a minute longer in its custody, as the Constitution expressly provides solons immunity from arrest while the House of Representatives is in session.

In less than 24 hours of its announcement, this 'state of emergency' being peddled by the Arroyo regime through Presidential Proclamation 1017 and its implementing orders has yielded grave violations of civil liberties, press freedom, and international human rights conventions.

Ka Bel filed pro-poor bills in the House of Representatives, such as HB 1063 providing for a P125 wage increase for private sector workers and HB 1064 providing for a P3,000 salary hike for all public sector workers. Both bills seek to provide immediate relief for all workers amidst the price hikes, RVAT, and other anti-poor measures and policies of the Arroyo regime.

These abominable acts of political repression only further exposes Pres. Arroyo's insatiable greed for power and brazen disregard for the devastating effects of her policy decision on the lives of the toiling masses. Ka Bel is being suppressed for his vocal pronouncements and legislative actions that articulate the toiling masses real miseries under the GMA regime, their demands for immediate relief and upliftment from record-high poverty and hunger levels, and their disgust and opposition to the corruption, miseries, repression, and electoral fraud committed under the Arroyo regime.

This state of calamitous repression must not be allowed to continue. These only justify the urgency and correctness of the long-standing call for Pres. Arroyo's immediate removal from office, lest another fledgling dictatorship bring the dark years of Martial Law back with a new ferocity.

We are holding the Arroyo regime liable for the grave violations of human rights that have started since Day One of her assumption of the Presidency, and for the intensified assaults on civil liberties that this 'state of emergency' unconvincingly attempts to justify.

We call for the immediate release of Rep. Beltran. We call for the restoration of civil liberties, such as the right to a free press, to peaceful assembly, and to freedom of expression, which the Arroyo administration has mangled beyond recognition.