

**STATEMENT OF THE FREEDOM FUND FOR FILIPINO JOURNALISTS ON THE P2 MILLION
'DONATED' BY MRS. GLORIA MACAPAGAL ARROYO**

IN his October 27 column in the *Manila Bulletin*, Press Secretary Cerge Remonde said that “she (Mrs. Gloria Macapagal Arroyo) donated P2 million to the Freedom Fund for Filipino Journalists to help the family of victims in their search for justice.” Lest our colleagues in the media community as well as the public at large get the impression that the FFFJ has in its custody P2 million from Mrs. Arroyo, may we appraise Secretary Remonde and everyone else who’s interested of the following facts:

The P2 million Secretary Remonde mentioned probably refers to Mrs. Arroyo’s pledge of P2 million she made last March during a meeting with the FFFJ. FFFJ has not received that “donation.”

FFFJ acknowledges receipt of P1.1 million from then House Speaker Jose de Venecia and P200,000 from then Congressman Gilbert Remulla in support of FFFJ efforts to address the killing of journalists. FFFJ records on how these amounts are being spent are of course available for public scrutiny.

The Office of the Press Secretary did announce in May 2005 the launching of a P5-million press freedom fund. OPS said that "Press Secretary and Presidential Spokesman Ignacio R. Bunye said P3 million of the Fund will come from the office of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, while the office of Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. will put up the remaining P2 million. " Secretary Bunye said that P2 million of the above amount would be used as reward money for information leading to the arrest and prosecution of suspects in the killing of journalists, P1 million for the Witness Protection Program (WPP), and P2 million for the operations of a police Quick Reaction Team that would be organized to respond to attacks on media practitioners.

However, FFFJ received only the P1.1 million from Speaker de Venecia and the P200,000 from then Congressman Gilbert Remulla. While FFFJ was informed in November 2006 that the P3 million from the office of Mrs. Arroyo had been “approved,” that amount was actually released to the Department of Justice. FFFJ thought that the amount would be most useful if utilized to strengthen the DOJ’s Witness Protection Program. The amount has since been with the DOJ.