

# GMA faces new impeach case

Critics of President Arroyo, including several militant lawmakers, will file a new impeachment case against her today with the House of Representatives.

Lawyer Harry Roque, the impeachment complainants' counsel, told reporters yesterday that Representatives Teodoro

Casiño of Bayan Muna, Risa Hontiveros Baraquel of Akbayan and Teofisto Guingona III of Bukidnon would be among the petitioners.

"We have a new complainant in (the person of) businessman Joey de Venecia III," he said.

Sought for comment, Speaker Prospero Nograles

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said the new complaint would be accepted if it were filed today even if the House is closed for the weekend.

Nograles said he would instruct the secretariat to designate someone to receive it.

"We will accept it and it will go through the usual procedural, substantive and political processes. I want to emphasize that impeachment is a political process," he said.

Deputy Majority Leader Neptali Gonzales II said it would be more difficult now for critics of the President to impeach her.

"The people are already looking to the 2010 elections, which are fast approaching, to elect a new leadership. I think they would frown upon any other mode of replacing incumbents," he said.

Roque said the other impeachment petitioners include officials of militant organizations like Bayan Muna, Akbay-an and Bayan, and civil society groups like the Black and White Movement.

Malacañang, on the other hand, expressed confidence that the impeachment complaint will be eventually dismissed for lack of merit.

Presidential Adviser for Political Affairs Gabriel Claudio and Press Secretary Jesus Dureza, in separate statements, slammed Roque for making the initiative at a time when the country needs to be united to confront the global economic crisis.

Dureza described the impeachment move as "another classic example of propagandist Roque's carpet bombing ploys and twisted imagination."

"(Roque) has ceased being an advocate for truth as he pretends to be," Dureza said. "He has sadly transformed himself into a hatchetman with a blatant political agenda."

Claudio said the move "coming from certified GMA-haters" like Roque to initiate another impeachment complaint came not as a surprise.

He said the House "will dispose of it (impeachment complaint) with dispatch, judiciousness and concern for the national interest."

Claudio said the complaint would not prosper because it is bereft of any legal ground, as the President cannot be held legally liable for any of the issues raised.

He said the proximity of the 2010 presidential elections and the current global financial turmoil will be taken into account by the lawmakers in dismissing the complaint as "absolutely unnecessary, distractive and destructive."

— Jess Diaz, Paolo Romero