

Ermita is lying!

Geneva, April 12 - The Philippine UPR Watch denounces the outright lies that Executive Secretary Eduardo R. Ermita has churned out in reporting to the United Nations Human Rights Council on the Philippine human rights record for the universal periodic review. His statement that “there is an open and vibrant democracy in the Philippines” and that the government is “a human rights defender” is the height of distortion and sends a chilling indication that impunity will continue to be the policy of the Arroyo regime.

Ermita’s statements were a callous disregard to the fact that more than a dozen countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada, took the Philippine government to task for its failure to address the extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances, especially in the prosecution of perpetrators. His statements ignored the fact that several countries also scored the Philippine government for its failure to address equally important issues such as the protection of migrant workers, the trafficking of women and children, and corruption. If the Philippine National Report was that good, the Philippines should be a paradise, whose people need not line up for rice, seek jobs abroad and would not be named one of the most corrupt countries in Asia. If the Report was that honest, countries would not have raised questions on the foregoing which are the core issues surrounding human rights violations in the Philippines.

In saying that the Philippine government under Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo, given what it achieved and what it seeks to do, is a “human rights defender,” Secretary Ermita arrogated to the Philippines what it does not rightfully deserve. It is the height of hypocrisy and an insult to the thousands of victims and their relatives who have been denied justice. That he had the gall and the temerity to project before the international community that the Arroyo government was also responsible for the legal remedies for human rights violations victims and would-be victims shows how the Arroyo government has mastered the art of lying.

What is true is that the Philippine government cannot escape the fact that countries are indeed monitoring closely the human rights situation in the Philippines. The countries saw through the report. They saw the deception and the brazen attempts to make a mockery of the UN mechanisms and processes such as the Universal Periodic Review.

What is also true is that were it not for the continuing vigilance of the Filipino people, the Arroyo government would go on lying and covering up for its crimes against the people. Were it not for the people telling the world what the real story in the Philippines is, others would likely fall into the government’s deception.

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