

The Philippine Justice System: Dehumanizing the Weak, Glorifying the Powerful

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The Philippine justice system has long been criticized for its deeply entrenched flaws, particularly in how it deals with different segments of society. For decades, marginalized groups and leftist political activists have found themselves on the receiving end of a dehumanizing, demonizing, and often fatal system. Meanwhile, individuals with powerful connections to the government are coddled and given preferential treatment. The case of former Bamban mayor Alice Guo provides a glaring example of this double standard—a microcosm of a broader issue where those connected to power enjoy immunity while dissenters are vilified.

A Two-Tiered System of Justice

The case of **Alice Guo**, a former mayor in the small town of Bamban, Tarlac, epitomizes the weaknesses of the Philippine justice system. Guo, a Chinese national naturalized as a Filipina, was under investigation for her suspected role in Philippine Offshore Gaming Operations (POGOs) during Duterte’s term. Despite being under scrutiny for potentially being a Chinese spy, Guo mysteriously disappeared while under investigation, only to be apprehended later in Indonesia.

Upon her extradition to the Philippines, Guo was not treated as an ordinary suspect facing grave allegations. Instead, she received what can only be described as VIP treatment. Government officials posed for selfies beside her as if she were a celebrity, not someone accused of being part of an international espionage and criminal ring. The spectacle of her return underscores how the powerful, especially those with connections to the previous administration, are treated with reverence, while ordinary citizens facing minor accusations are often subject to brutal treatment.

The Contrast with Leftist Activists and Government Critics

In stark contrast, leftist political activists and critics of the government face harsh repression. Trumped-up charges, arbitrary arrests, and prolonged detentions are the norms for those critical of government policies. One prime example is former **Senator Leila de Lima**, a staunch critic of Duterte’s brutal drug war. De Lima was arrested on questionable drug charges, subjected to intense character assassination, and has spent years in detention without conclusive evidence of her guilt. Unlike Guo, De Lima was treated not as a citizen but as an enemy of the state. Her case underscores how the justice system can be weaponized against those who challenge the powers that be.

The Philippine justice system often dehumanizes individuals on the margins of

society—activists, critics, indigenous peoples, and the impoverished. These groups are disproportionately targeted by state forces, accused of crimes ranging from rebellion to terrorism, often without due process. Their voices are silenced, their rights violated, and their humanity stripped away by a system that views them as enemies, not citizens. They are paraded as scapegoats, blamed for societal ills, and treated as a threat to national security, while their real crime is often nothing more than demanding accountability and justice.

The Political Nature of Philippine Justice

Alice Guo's case and the broader pattern of political repression illustrate that the justice system in the Philippines is far from impartial. It functions not as an institution to uphold the rule of law but as an apparatus to protect those in power while punishing dissenters. When individuals like Guo, accused of serious crimes, are treated as celebrities while critics of the government languish in prison cells, it sends a clear message: the law in the Philippines serves those who serve the powerful.

This two-tiered system of justice has fostered a culture of impunity. Those connected to the highest echelons of power—whether through political, economic, or personal ties—are shielded from accountability. They can manipulate the system to their advantage, knowing that their influence will protect them from the consequences of their actions. Meanwhile, the weak and the marginalized bear the full brunt of a justice system that views them not as citizens with rights but as obstacles to be crushed.

The Criminalization of Government Critics

The criminalization of dissent has become a hallmark of governance in the Philippines, where the powerful can manipulate the law to silence their critics. This dynamic has led many to question the very nature of governance in the country. In a system where real criminals are treated like celebrities and those who demand accountability are treated as criminals, can the government itself be considered criminal?

This question speaks to the heart of the Philippine justice system's dysfunction. A government that dehumanizes its citizens, demonizes dissenters, and crucifies the weak cannot claim moral authority. It operates on fear, suppression, and privilege. Those who dare to criticize this system are met with the full force of the state's power, while those who perpetuate criminal acts with political connections are untouchable.

Conclusion: A Call for Reform

The Philippine justice system is in dire need of reform. It must stop being an instrument of political power and instead become a genuine arbiter of justice. Until the law treats all citizens equally, without regard for their political affiliations, connections, or economic status, it will remain a tool of oppression rather than a force for justice.

Alice Guo's case is a glaring example of how deeply broken the system is. It serves as a stark reminder that justice in the Philippines is not blind but all too often turned in favor of those with power. Leftist activists and government critics, who stand up for the poor and marginalized, will continue to suffer until there is a collective effort to dismantle this unjust system.

In the Philippines today, the scales of justice do not tip towards fairness, but towards

protecting the powerful and punishing the weak. Without significant change, the cycle of impunity, repression, and injustice will only continue.

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Featured image: Guo after being captured by the Directorate General of Immigration and the Indonesian National Police in Tangerang and confirming her identity (From the Public Domain)

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