

De Lima to Maguindanao massacre victims' kins: Justice will be served under P-Noy gov't

TACURONG CITY, July 25 (PNA) - Justice Secretary Leila de Lima has assured relatives of victims of the Maguindanao massacre that justice will be served under the Aquino government.

Speaking before relatives of the Nov. 23 Maguindanao massacre here on Saturday, de Lima reiterated President Aquino's marching orders that justice should be served in the worst politically motivated violence in the country.

Relatives, loved ones and supporters of the slain journalists and wife and relatives of Maguindanao Gov. Esmael "Toto" Mangudadatu gathered here to commemorate the eight month anniversary of the Maguindanao carnage.

De Lima also met with Mangudadatu whose wife, sisters and other relatives were among the 57 people killed in an isolated countryside in Ampatuan town, some 40 kilometers from here.

De Lima assured Mangudadatu that justice will be served.

Mangudadatu declined to visit the massacre site, claiming he could not bear the pain of seeing the place where his wife, along with other innocent people, were buried alive.

Speaking to massacre victims' relatives, De Lima said her office is strengthening the witness protection program and "any other" assistance it can give to the still grieving relatives.

She rallied the relatives to continue the battle cry "Never Again."

She repeatedly assured the relatives that President Aquino is determined to support their quest for justice.

The trial resumes on Wednesday, July 28, against the principal suspects and other accessories.

Andal Ampatuan Jr, mayor of Datu Unsay town and son of Maguindanao ex-governor Andal Ampatuan Sr, Zaldy Ampatuan and four other Ampatuans are in custody facing multiple murder charges before the Quezon City regional trial court.

Only 12 of the 197 suspects have been arrested while others, mostly members of the defunct Maguindanao civilian volunteer organization, remained at large.

De Lima admitted that the process was quite slow because of what she called "so many delaying tactics."

She said there appeared to be "a strategy of delay and pattern of harassment" but added that the wheels of justice continue to grind under the month-old Aquino government. (PNA)

RMA/NYP/EOF <<< Back