

**PRESS STATEMENT**

**SEN. M.A. MADRIGAL on the GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations**

**November 18 2009**

**JAMBY AND NDFP PANEL OPPOSE APPOINTMENT  
OF NORBERTO GONZALES**

In a joint statement in Utrecht, Senator M.A. Madrigal, Chairperson of the Senate Committee on Peace, Unification and Reconciliation, and National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) Chairperson Luis Jalandoni agreed that it is urgently important to undertake effective steps towards the resumption of formal peace talks between the Government of the Philippines (GRP) and the NDFP as the senator met with the Negotiating Panel of the NDFP in Utrecht, Netherlands on November 16-17, 2009.

Both Sen. Madrigal and the NDFP Panel condemned the appointment of National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales as secretary of National Defense.

“The appointment of a disreputable fascist in the form of Norberto Gonzales as secretary of National Defense is not only insulting to defenders of human rights but is an appalling move of the government to sabotage the resumption of formal peace talks between the GRP and the NDF. If the government is sincere in trying to speed up the peace process, why in the world would Malacañang appoint a notorious human rights violator in such a vital position?” Madrigal said.

Norberto Gonzales is one of the chief implementors of Oplan Bantay Laya, a government operation bent on killing and persecuting members of legal organizations such as Bayan Muna and Anakpawis, and his appointment is said to be a real slap in the face for the countless victims of human rights violation under the Arroyo administration.

According to Madrigal, instead of immediately implementing and upholding the GRP-NDF Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL), Pres. Arroyo chose to conduct an inhumane war with those seeking social reforms by placing Gonzales as her war dog.

“What a shameless thing to do! Pres. Arroyo must fix her act and remove Gonzales from his post if she genuinely wants lasting peace in this country, else we degenerate into a nation not worthy of being called civilized,” Madrigal said.

Senator Madrigal reiterated her commitment to strive for long-lasting peace in the Philippines as she has been going to Utrecht annually for many years now to aid in the peace negotiations. Together with the senator is her Chief Legislative Officer Atty. Gary Jimenez. The other panelists present were Fidel Agcaoili, Julieta de Lima and Coni Ledesma. Also present was Prof. Jose Maria Sison, NDFP Chief Political Consultant.