

LEGAL RIGHTS



By Atty. Johnson Lazaro

Explosions, Murder, Impeachment – But Life Goes On in Manila

A FEW weeks before I left for my scheduled immigration seminars in Manila, an explosion rocked the popular Glorietta shopping center in the crowded area of Makati. Several people died and many others were injured. At the day of my arrival, Saturday November 10, 2007, the head of the legal department of the Commission on Elections, Alioden Dalaig, was gunned down in front of the hotel where I just checked in. Dalaig was crossing the street in front of Hyatt Hotel and Casino when the gunman approached and shot him at close range. This happened at about 6:00 p.m., several hours after I had just entered the hotel to prepare for my seminars. Just a few days after the murder, a car bomb exploded outside the entrance lobby of the Batasan complex in Quezon City. The bomb killed a congressman, his driver and injuring 12 others. Due to these events, and for security reasons, the General Consul at the U.S. Embassy restricted entries into the building and cancelled our appointment. However despite these harrowing stories, Filipinos seem to take it in stride. It's not that they are jaded or apathetic. On the contrary, many are fearful and worried about the future in the Philippines. But many who I spoke with remained philosophical. The taxi driver who took me to

the office the day after the blast at Batasan assured me that it's all a part of living in Manila. He stated (in Tagalog) "It's the way of life. But I can't stop living and driving my cab or my family will starve. You learn to take what life gives you here in the Philippines." That's true. You roll with the punches as they say. Let me also mention that while these blasts and murder were taking place, a group is trying to impeach the President. I guess it's that time of the year. The Philippine Supreme Court dismissed impeachment complaints in 2005 and 2006. It appears that this recent impeachment is headed the same direction. But again life goes on with many Filipinos. A client who owns a profitable business in Makati admitted that the masses may be getting restless and the current events are merely previews of what's to come. I agree that the hard life in the Philippines may eventually cause people to go on mass protests. But I'm continually amazed that despite the challenges Filipinos face on a daily basis, they remain vigilant and committed to a better future. I believe that the violence that we see are isolated events. The majority still prefer to live peacefully and carve out a meaningful future for their children. At the time of the writing of this article, the Philippine National Police (PNP) declared that the Batasan blast

is solved. The chief went on national television to enumerate the evidence against three suspected Abu Sayyaf bandits. These suspects were killed by the police causing some raised eyebrows from congressional members. A case of this magnitude solved within 72 hours, has caused some to criticize the PNP. Some lawmakers admitted that something stinks about the handling of the case by the PNP – more controversy. A man selling cigarettes at the corner of my hotel did not see the murder but had this to say (in Tagalog): "Don't worry; we will recover from this tragedy. Our politics is far from perfect and we have many problems facing our nation. But our spirits are high. We will be fine. Life will go on." These are words of wisdom from a Filipino who still sees the possibility of light at the end of the tunnel. *** Atty. Lazaro represents immigrants in Immigration Courts throughout the United States and U.S. Embassy in Manila. The firm's offices are located in San Francisco, Makati City (Philippines), and Fremont, Union City California. Telephone (415) 278-9577. E-mail: Law@LazaroLaw.com Website: www.lazarolaw.com. *** This article should not be taken as legal advice for any individual case or situation. The information is intended to be general and should not be relied upon for any specific situation. This is not meant to create a lawyer-client relationship. (Advertising Supplement)

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