

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

'Shameless abuse of...

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eroded."

Estimates of the crowd that gathered in the intersection of Paseo de Roxas and Ayala Avenue ranged from 5,200 by police to 13,000 by organizers of the multisectoral rally against an attempt by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's allies to convene a constituent assembly (Con-ass) and amend the Constitution. *The Philippine Daily Inquirer* put the crowd at 10,000.

Speaking in Filipino, Aquino said that when the dictator Ferdinand Marcos was driven from power in 1986, "didn't we vow that we will never again allow to throw away our freedom?"

Aquino said this was not the leadership that Filipinos deserve or the society that should be handed down to the next generation. She called on Filipinos to demonstrate their protest against moves to amend the Constitution.

Stealing presidency for 3rd time

A message from former President Joseph Estrada, read by his son, San Juan Mayor Joseph Victor "JV" Ejercito, said: "If we allow her minions to maneuver (Con-ass), it is like allowing her to steal the presidency for the third time."

Estrada was referring to his ouster in 2001 and the 2004 presidential election allegedly stolen by Arroyo.

Opening salvo

Thousands bearing placards saying "No to Cha-cha" marched on the Makati business center in what organizers described as just the "opening salvo" of bigger and louder protests across the country against Charter change.

The demonstrators—an assembly of political figures, church leaders and leftist groups—were one in dismissing Malacañang's position that the President had nothing to do with House Resolution No. 1109 that seeks to amend the Constitution without the Senate.

"All my life I haven't cursed anyone, but now I call on the spirits of the *babaylans*, prophets, and heroes (to) curse the evil in government," Sr. Mary Mananzan, of the Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines, told the crowd. "We don't want Gloria in whatever title she may hold."

Sen. Manuel "Mar" Roxas II said Ms Arroyo could run for Congress next year so long as she would keep her hands off the Constitution.

"She has no mandate to fiddle with the Constitution," he said, adding that it was "time to pack her bags."

"It is very clear that the people don't want Con-ass. This is not the priority," Roxas said.

Fair warning

Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Oscar Cruz said it was "impossible" that Malacañang's allies in the House of Representatives cooked up HR 1109 without Arroyo's blessings.

"Majority in the House is on her side, if not in her pocket," he said. "They're only as good as the benefits they get."

Gabriela party-list Rep Liza Maza said the rally should serve as a fair warning to Arroyo "not to anger the people even more."

"This is the start of the backlash from the people," said Akbayan party-list Rep Risa Hontiveros.

Different displays of discontent

The show of dismay over HR 1109 came in different forms during the rally.

Protesters prepared what they called a "Gloria punching bag" to illustrate their anger over the Con-ass resolution.

The '90s band Datu's Tribe played a song that urged the crowd to "condemn pigs," ostensibly referring to congressmen who voted for HR 1109.

The protesters presented on a giant screen a video mosaic of congressmen who voted for HR 1109. In the piece titled *Mga Palaka ni Gloria* (Gloria's Toadies), the congressmen's

photos later morphed into a huge portrait of the President.

After three hours, the crowd dispersed peacefully, ending the biggest rally against Charter change since more than 15,000 massed at Manila's Quirino Grandstand in December 2006.

Bayan Muna party-list Rep. Satur Ocampo vowed, "We will stall them until we paralyze Con-ass."

Sen. Loren Legarda said HR 1109 was "clearly a violation of the Constitution" because it eased the Senate out of the equation.

Pangasinan Rep. Jose de Venecia Jr., hitherto a rabid proponent of Charter change, said the resolution was meant to extend Arroyo's stay in power so she could be either president or prime minister "for life."

"She's flaunting her defiance of public opinion," he said.

Exit options

Pampanga Gov. Ed Panlilio said speculation that Arroyo was running for a congressional seat in her Lubao hometown could be one of her "exit options," explaining that it indicated she was aiming to become a prime minister in a parliamentary system.

He said that the President was aware that she would be facing prosecution for corruption once her term was over.

Grace Poe, daughter of the late Fernando Poe Jr. who lost the 2004 presidential vote, appealed to lawmakers' conscience: "Do you still have a God or you worship only money?"

"People are fed up," said Ayala group official Vicky Garchitorena, who marched together with members of the Former Senior Government Officials (FSGO) group. "This is foul way of expressing their outrage already at what Congress has been doing."

Former Trade Secretary. Juan Santos said: "Why hasn't she declared that she's definitely stepping down? It has to be specific. Why doesn't she say specifically that she's against Cha-cha and House Resolution 1109?"

Soldiers are watching

Sen. Rodolfo Biazon warned: "The soldiers are watching what's happening in the streets. If this reaches the level of EDSA II, you can't be sure that they would not come out."

He voiced fears that while two previous military-backed popular revolts in 1986 and 2001 succeeded and civilian power was restored, this time around that might not happen.

"They were hoping that there would be good governance but that did not happen so this time they might ask 'Why should we give back the power? I am afraid of that,'" said Biazon, a former chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

In a statement read by his wife Aloj, Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim, who is incarcerated on rebellion charges, said that soldiers had "no obligation to support the administration in committing illegal acts."

Lim said that the Arroyo administration "has lost all sense of shame."

He urged the military: "You know what is right. You know what is just. I trust that you can see the truth should the time call for protecting the people."

Magdalo members said 150 of them were in the rally, along with an unspecified number of the Reform the Armed Forces Movement, but they did not say if there were active servicemen among them.

Jerome Layug, the 21-year-old brother of detained Magdalo rebel James Layug, came to the rally together with his mother.

"This administration wants to change the Constitution and stay in power. We cannot allow that," Jerome Layug said. (*Inquirer.net*)

82% of market reached...

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thirst for relevant news and information has made many residents of ethnic communities turn to media outlets that do substantial reporting on their culture, issues and neighborhoods. The increase in ethnic media audiences is incredible, considering the declines that many mainstream media outlets are confronting."

At the opening plenary, pollster Sergio Bendixen announced these findings on outreach and impact of ethnic media and their relevance for communication with new America. The survey, conducted by Bendixen & Associates in eight languages including Tagalog, contacted 1,329 African-American (400), Hispanic (400) and Asian-American (529) adults. It has a 2.7 percent margin of error.

"The ethnic media is growing, and it is growing at a very impressive rate," Bendixen noted, "A lot of outlets in the ethnic media have posted substantial growth despite great competition and despite the fact that mainstream media have been losing their readers during the past couple of years."

NAM, an organization that collaborates with more than 2,500 ethnic media outlets, across the US, wanted to find out where the 69 million Hispanics and African and Asian Americans in the United States get their information.

The poll found that Asian Americans reported that they turn to ethnic media for news coverage of their home countries. For instance, new ethnic television stations, such as KCNS-TV (Chinese) in San Francisco and VATV (Vietnamese) in the Washington DC metro area, are popular because of their home country coverage.

Newspapers like *Sing Tao*, the *World Journal*, *Korea Daily* and *Korea Times* have substantially increased their circulation during the last four years. The reach of weekly and monthly publications that cater to the interests of the Filipino and Asian Indian populations has also expanded.

The poll also found that the penetration of Spanish-language television—led by network giants Univision and Telemundo — increased during the last four years and is now almost universal, covering 86 percent of the country's Hispanics. New Spanish language television stations are broadcasting in Raleigh, NC and Seattle.

The availability of African American-oriented channels is still limited, but a majority of black adults report watching Black Entertainment Television (BET) and similar channels on a

regular basis. Meanwhile, the penetration of African American-oriented radio stations has increased. They now reach two-thirds of black adults.

Many new Spanish-language newspapers have begun publishing in the last four years and now reach more than one-third of Hispanic adults. New publications include *Padres & Hijos* in Atlanta and *La Voz de San Diego*.

Bendixen, president of Bendixen & Associates, said the polling also showed that a substantial percentage of African American, Hispanic and Asian American households have cable or satellite service.

"What's clear is that even as the country suffers through a recession, ethnic communities are staying tuned into ethnic media," Bendixen said, noting that an increase in penetration for African-American publications was sparked, in part, by interest in Barack Obama's candidacy and presidency.

Ms. Close said the increases in penetration come as the ethnic media are transforming themselves and preparing to play broader roles in their communities.

Emergency

On Thursday, June 4, Ms. Close unveiled an emergency network system that will send urgent health and disaster alerts to 3,000 ethnic media outlets, which will then transmit those messages to ethnic communities.

"This state-of-the-art system will open the doors to ethnic communities that are not reached by mainstream media," she said. "The poll results reinforce the importance of using the ethnic media to communicate with populations—many don't speak English—which have often been ignored."

It's clear, Ms. Close said, that "ethnic media can be counted as an important segment of the New Media, and will continue growing in audience and influence in the future."

NAM is negotiating with government agencies, as well as non-profits, such as the American Red Cross to utilize the network. While emergency messaging is the immediate priority, the system may in the future be activated for public policy or private sector marketing that would create new revenue sources for ethnic media outlets.

"The system will leverage the ethnic media to open new doors to communities that the mainstream media often fails to reach, better connecting them to critical health and emergency information that can improve their quality of life," the NAM statement said. ■



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