

# Cop attempts to arrest man after heated altercation in private village

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MANILA, Philippines A police officer attempted to arrest a Spanish national in the front yard of his own home in a private subdivision in Makati City, after a heated argument on the supposed quarantine violation of the latter's house staff.

Javier Salvador Parra said his female house staff was watering plants in his front yard on Sunday when a barangay personnel saw her not wearing a face mask. He said a policeman, later identified as Senior Master Sergeant Roland Von Madrona, then came and wanted to fine him P1,000 for this supposed violation of his housemaid.

"I wasn't aware that there is a law saying that inside your own property you must wear a face mask," Parra said in an email to the media.

But according to a report from the Makati City police, the concerned policeman was inside the subdivision as requested by the chairwoman of Barangay Dasmariñas to regularly implement quarantine rules there. The report added that the housemaid was also "outside perimeter property" when the incident happened.

Parra said his house staff then went inside the house to relay the matter to him, after which he went outside his house and asked why the police had to fine him over the supposed violation.

"I told him frankly that a fine isn't necessary as it occurred on private property. It escalated with the policeman charging at me and trespassing my private property without a valid search warrant and

wanting to arrest me for no valid reason," he said.

The incident was caught in a video taken by Parra's wife. In that video, Madrona was seen tackling Parra to the ground to arrest him. Parra said this caused him physical injury and abrasions. He added he was also suffering from spinal injury and that being thrown on the ground caused him "immense" physical pain.

He was able to evade arrest after entering the front door of his house, while his wife continued arguing with the police officer.

"Does Makati police not have better things to do, like stop real criminals? If there was no camera running, would he perhaps have shot me, as the policeman did with the mentally challenged man a few days ago?" said Parra. He was referring to Corporal Winston Ragos, a retired military man who was suffering post-traumatic stress disorder and was shot dead by police in Quezon City for supposedly violating quarantine rules on April 21.

"My concern is mainly that this police officer and Makati police do this also to the poor, who are not as defensive as me. Filipinos are all in a dire situation with the lockdown, the last thing they need is Makati policemen going havoc on Makati citizens," he added.

A separate video of the earlier scenario before the scuffle, however, showed the policeman being calm and polite while talking to Parra until the latter hurled him expletives.

The police report added that the officer politely spoke when he approached the housemaid.

"At this juncture, police officer politely introduce himself and advised the housemaid to wear her face mask for her safety," read the police report.

In a text message to reporters, Makati City police chief Col. Rogelio Simon denied that Madrona was asking for a P1,000 fine. Simon dismissed this claim of Parra as a mere "accusation."

He added that the maid was only asked to present an identification card for the issuance of violation citation tickets. She then went inside the house but Parra, who was shirtless and also did not wear a face mask, went outside and confronted the policeman and the barangay personnel.

When Parra went outside the house, he then questioned the authority of the officer and hurled expletives at him, according to the police report.

At that time, said Bantay Bayan managed to document the situation using his mobile phone camera, thus Mr. Parra at that time [had] gone berserk and [was] uttering unsavory words towards [the] police officer and even humiliated the said officer, the report added.

The incident has also reached higher authorities, even prompting Philippine National Police chief Gen. Archie Gamboa to order the National Capital Region Police Office to investigate the incident. Makati City Mayor Abby Binay also gave the same order to the city police.

Charges for disobedience to a person in authority, direct assault, and for violation of the Makati City Ordinance 2000-089 for not wearing a face mask outside residence are being prepared for filing against Parra. Maj. Gideon Ines, Makati City police investigation division chief, said Parra's housemaid will also be issued an ordinance violation receipt.

## **EDITORIAL**

Crackdown

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What a start to the week. Yesterday, people woke up to the disquieting video of a policeman assaulting and attempting to arrest a homeowner in Dasmariñas Village, Makati City, right in his own property. The man had intervened (heatedly, it should be noted) when the cop, in full camouflage uniform, reportedly accosted the househelp who was watering the plants in the driveway without a mask.

The altercation led to the homeowner being wrestled to the ground and the cop declaring at one point, “I arrest you in my presence!”

The barangay later released a statement siding with the police, saying it was advised that: “This resident was on the street and sidewalk which belongs to [a] common area, therefore a public place. He was committing a crime in the presence of the officer, and could be arrested even if he retreated to his property.”

On Tuesday last week, the police were also in hot water for the killing of Winston Ragos, an Army veteran suffering from mental health problems who was shot to death by Master Sgt. Daniel Florendo Jr. allegedly over Ragos’ violation of quarantine regulations.

The killing of a mentally disturbed civilian was an appalling manifestation of the strong-arm approach the government has taken to managing what is primarily a public health crisis. But the public uproar that followed, and the homicide charges eventually slapped on Florendo, apparently have not chastened the police.

As the weeks of quarantine have ground on, human rights and civil liberties are seemingly being set aside willy-nilly in the name of fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. On top of thousands of mostly poor citizens arrested, the National Bureau of Investigation has summoned at least 17 people for allegedly spreading fake news during the pandemic, including one who questioned why the government had money to buy a P2-billion jet (a widely reported issue in October 2019) but no money for health services.

The penchant for coercion and intimidation has seeped into local governments. In Cebu, filmmaker and business owner Victoria Beltran was arrested without warrant after she posted a clearly satirical post reacting to the city government’s confounding announcement that the entire Sitio Zapatera in Cebu City (with a population of 9,000) was “already deemed as a contaminated place.”

Days later, in Cordova town, policemen paid a visit to the home of Maria Shanyl Emeliano and interrogated her on her Facebook post complaining about empty grocery and market stalls and nonworking ATMs in her town, which was said to have angered the mayor.

Government employees are similarly forbidden from speaking their minds. After Department of Environment and Natural Resources assistant regional director Marcos Dacanay “advised” employees in a memo “not to comment or post negative in the social media against the government,” Environment Undersecretary Benny Antiporda doubled down on the move by saying “you don’t bite the hand that feeds you” — a justification subsequently demolished by Commission on Elections Commissioner Rowena Guanzon, who pointed out that the Supreme Court has ruled that government workers do not lose their freedom of speech.

In yet another case of the police targeting perceived dissenters, seven members of the militant group Anakpawis were blocked from delivering relief goods in Norzagaray, Bulacan, supposedly for violating the lockdown, and then were red-tagged for bringing with them copies of the alternative newspaper Pinoy Weekly, a legitimate publication existing since 2002.

And over the weekend, Philippine labor officials similarly afflicted with the authoritarian bug took the unprecedented step of seeking the deportation of an overseas Filipino worker in Taiwan for what they described as her “nasty and malevolent” posts against President Duterte. Elanel Ordidor, a caregiver, is not only under threat of being evicted from Taiwan, she also faces cyberlibel charges.

Meanwhile, Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. and Albay Rep. Joey Salceda prominently shared fake news of the Divisoria market supposedly teeming with people, which turned out to be old photos taken before the pandemic — and they, along with Sen. Koko Pimentel who violated quarantine protocols in a brazen and dangerous way, have been spared the crackdown.

It cannot be helped: One looks at countries such as Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Canada, and Germany and feels envy at the sense of calm, common sense, and openness displayed by their governments and leaders in addressing the monumental challenges of the pandemic, in return inspiring support and informed engagement from the public.

In the Philippines, on the other hand, as anxiety stalks the land and many more citizens worry about where to get their next meal, officialdom is busy wielding a deplorable, unnecessary weapon: fear.