



Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto G. Romulo (left) receives OFWs Marjanna Sakilan and Idan Tezano (second and third from left, respectively) at the DFA. Also in the photo is Philippine Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Antonio P. Villamor (right). (Photo by Tony Bosa)

29 January 2010 - Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto G. Romulo received two overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) who were saved from the death sentence in Saudi Arabia through the personal intercession of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

Idan Tezano and Marjanna Sakilan arrived from Jeddah via Qatar Airways at around 3:35 p.m., accompanied by Philippine Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Antonio P. Villamor. On hand to welcome them were Executive Director Enrico Fos of the DFA Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs (DFA-OUMWA) and DFA-OUMWA Principal Assistant Maurice Tiempo.

"I am glad to see you well and in Manila. The Philippine Government has spared no effort to ensure that you are safe, and are able to come home to the Philippines and be with your families," he said.

"The President has asked us to go the farthest length to help all our OFWs, our new heroes," he

added.

After the meeting with Secretary Romulo, they proceeded to Malacanan where President Macapagal-Arroyo would receive them.

Ms. Tejano and Ms. Sakilan, who hail from Batangas and Jolo, respectively, were charged of homicide and robbery for the death of Ms. Tejano's pregnant lady employer on 21 May 2001.

The Jeddah General Shari'ah Court sentenced them to death by hanging (quisas) in May 2004, which was eventually affirmed by the Supreme Judicial Council, but the execution was suspended due to the minority of the victim's daughter.

There were apprehensions in 2005 that the sentence would be carried out given the gravity of the crime committed.

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo sent the first of several appeals to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah on 23 July 2005, requesting the King to save the two Filipinas from death by an act of clemency.

In 2007, a second letter from President Arroyo to King Abdullah was hand-delivered by DFA Undersecretary Rafael Seguis to the Director-General of the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA).

After the settlement of the private rights aspect of the case, the Jeddah Grand Court eventually lowered the sentence of the two OFWs to 12 years imprisonment and 1,200 lashes.

During the visit of President Arroyo to Saudi Arabia on 23 September 2009 for the inauguration of the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, she handed a personal note to King Abdullah to once again request clemency and immediate repatriation of the two OFWs considering that both the private and private rights aspects of the case were already settled.

After follow up meetings with officials of the Saudi MFA and other agencies, Ambassador Villamor was informed by Deputy Minister Dr. Ahmed Al-Salam of the signing of the order of release for the two Filipinas.

The two served eight years and seven months in jail.

The Philippine Government, through the Philippine Embassy in Riyadh and the Philippine Consulate-General in Jeddah, is also making representations for the pardon of other Filipinos in Saudi jails.

It has redoubled its efforts in light of the announcement of the pardon issued by King Abdullah last 11 December 2009. To mark the return of Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz from medical treatment abroad, the Saudi King issued royal pardons to prisoners who do not pose any danger to public security.

Both the Embassy and the Consulate-General submitted a list containing all Filipinos in Saudi jails for consideration to the royal pardon.

The royal pardons would cover those who are detained or sentenced to jail for petty crimes and violations, and who have made restitutions to their victims.

Two Filipinas Saved from Death Penalty in Saudi Arabia Arrive in Manila today

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An initial batch of nine Filipinos have been pardoned and released under this royal decree. END