



## **Deteriorating Democracy in the Philippines: Rule of Law Must Be Upheld**

May 11, 2018 – Democratic institutions continue to be beleaguered in the Philippines. On May 11, the Supreme Court ousted its own Chief Justice, Maria Lourdes Sereno through an archaic process called Quo Warranto. According to the country’s constitution, the Chief Justice can only be removed through an impeachment. Thus what happened was clearly a transgression of due process. The Supreme Court justices removed Sereno after voting 8-6, approving a petition filed by the government’s solicitor general questioning the validity of her appointment on grounds of her not allegedly submitting documents about her wealth that is required when she was applying for the position. This was a clear disregard for the rule of law and integrity of the democratic institution. Chief Justice Sereno has been perceived to be a constant critic of the Duterte administration when she questioned some aspects of Duterte’s Drug War that has left thousands dead from extra-judicial killings.

Sereno’s ouster is a great disappointment and setback for Asia as the Philippines has been regarded a champion and model for democracy in the region. The removal of the Chief Justice through a disregard of the rule of law undermines the independence of the judiciary and checks and balances in the government that is vital for a healthy democracy. This is a clear signal of the Duterte’s regime’s continuing press for authoritative control of all branches of the government gravely compromising the fundamental principles of democracy and human rights.

The Asia Democracy Network expresses its grave concern on the backsliding of democracy in the Philippines. ADN appeals to the democratic tradition of the Philippine Supreme Court and reconsider its decision and allow Chief Justice Sereno’s fate be decided instead through the proper due process. We stand in solidarity with the people of the Philippines in this bleak chapter of their country as they proceed to fight back for democracy.

Asia Democracy Network