

## **Interview 35: PHILIPPINES: Beverly Santos**

Ms. Beverly Anne Santos is 24 years old. She is a television reporter for a local television station in General Santos City. She is a Bachelor of Arts major in Mass Communications from the Notre Dame of Dadiangas University (NDDU). In this interview, she speaks of her experience as a broadcast journalist of the Filipino policing system.

### **What do you think of the policing system of your country?**

The country has a good policing system. As a journalist, I am aware of that. For example, during the elections there was a gun ban order. Police checkpoints were required and they were ordered to prosecute violators; it was a good system. But the problem of the policing system is with the implementation and application. The police produce very few arrests and crimes involving illegal arms still exist. In General Santos City, PNP (Philippine National Police) checkpoints do not operate for 24 hours. They stop operating after midnight and have only two or three officers. With these weak points, not all vehicles can be stopped and inspected. Vehicles can easily avoid the checkpoint, as the cops are so busy.

I would suggest that a different system be put into place here in General Santos City. For example, the protocol on responding to murders should change. Instead of calling the SOCO (Scene of the Crime Operatives) team first, it should be the hospital or the ambulance first. In my previous coverage, people from the funeral homes usually arrive early. I think the police should have regular safety training and guidelines on responding to crime victims with the objective to save the life of the victim.

### **What do you think of the police's use of torture?**

Torture is definitely a bad thing! I am against all aspects of torture. Everyone, even criminals, have human rights. The police's use of torture is an abuse of authority. As a media person, I heard allegations of police brutality from arrested suspects. The country has given uniformed men so much power that they can use it without prosecution, and the people are afraid to oppose them. But I am happy; a country which upholds democracy is well-informed and educated about the anti torture law. There are only a few reports of torture cases.

What the public should be aware of is police harassment. To us media people, we have experienced their hostility and arrogance. In one instance, during an attempt to get an interview at the CIDG (Criminal Investigation and Detection Group) office at Camp Lira earlier this year, members of the press were prohibited from entering the CIDG compound because they had a number of high-risk detainees. The detainees were the Ampatuan clan, who were murder suspects in the killing of 57 people in Maguindanao. An ABS-CBN crew entered the compound and to their surprise, a policeman greeted them with anger complaining about them coming inside the compound. One police even moved the camera away, knowing it was being filmed.

### **What is your idea of a good relationship between the police and citizens?**

A good relationship could begin if the citizens started trusting the police again. But for this, the police must earn their trust. An ideal relationship between the public and the police would be where the police are seen as heroes, fighting evil and promoting the law. This will happen only if the police had high morale, were good leaders and had the best facilities to perform their duties.

**If you have a problem, would you feel safe going to the police to complain?**

In my job, I usually encourage crime victims to go the police. The police is the government agency who has the power to enforce the law. But for my own problems, I wouldn't feel safe. I have valid experiences but I do not want to talk about them. I believe the police still have a long way to go to be seen as heroes. In my experience, I had an interview with new police recruits and I learned that their major reason for enlisting was financial, not for any higher purpose. Police officers have stable salaries and benefits; their salaries are paid from the government taxes. For many Filipinos, they apply to become a police officer as an answer to their own problems, not so they can answer the problems of others.

**Is there a law against domestic violence law in your country? If yes, is it well implemented? If not, what are the problems?**

Yes, there is a law against domestic violence, but it is not well implemented. Many abused women and children have received assistance through this law, but the problems come after the rescue. Local government units don't have enough funds to shelter them well, provide consistent food and provide for other needs, like their children's education; even private orphanages are not well supported. Repairing their buildings and finding sponsors are a constant problem. What we need is a livelihood program for abused women. In many cases, the women go back to their abusive husband because they cannot fend for themselves.