

Interview 42: PHILIPPINES: Alice Gapal

Mrs. Alice Gapal, a member of the Gabriela Women's Party talks about the Philippine National Police

What do you think of the policing system of your country? Is it good? Or do you think it should be different? Kindly explain. You can take your time.

For me, what I noticed most is the "kotong" system (extortion) of the police. On the contrary, they do not comply with their real task as police of people when it comes to the implementation of the law, on traffic for instance. They can be easily dissuaded by bribery. So I think the supposedly police system here in our country, meaning the task of keeping peace and order in our society, is not being put in practice by most, if not all, of our police.

What do you think of police use of torture? Good, Bad? Kindly explain.

For me the police use of torture is unjust and excessive. The use of torture is coercion and disrespect of human rights. The police do not have to coerce the person they are interrogating. But most often, what prevails on our police is their authority, as if it is above the law. They tend to abuse their power and always think they can use torture on any ordinary person.

What is your idea of good relationship between police and citizens?

I believe in the ability of the police to help us when we are in trouble. For instance if there are incidents of hold up in streets, the first thing we do is run to them and ask for help because we recognize their authority and we rely on their responsibility and commitment of keeping peace and order. The problem is that most of our police abuse their authority and that results to a wide gap between them and the citizens. The people have lost their trust with our police because of reports of abuse of power and their involvement in scandals and crimes that we often see and hear in trimedia.

If you have a problem, would you feel safe to go police and complain? Kindly explain.

It depends on the police. If I think I can trust a police, maybe it would help to make me feel safe when I ask for his/her help. Otherwise, I would just think that this person cannot help me in any possible way.

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

I am aware of the domestic violence in our country. We can find a lot of this mostly in houses where there are maids. I think this is because of our normalized notion of hierarchy, the notion of dominant and subordinate. But if we really recognize and respect the human rights of all individuals, maybe there will be no more domestic violence.

I am much aware of the Republic Act 9262, the law on violence against women and children. It really helps in raising our awareness on domestic violence. Many of us, especially the police and men, become aware of the rights of women and children. The formation of women's desk in barangays is also a result of this law. On our part in Gabriela Women's Party, we integrate the discussion of this law in our organizing work in communities.