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Teodoro demands immediate release of 3 ICRC workers; slams Abu's call for negotiation

Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro demanded today the immediate release of three workers of the International Commission of the Red Cross (ICRC) kidnapped by the bandit group Abu Sayyaf, rejecting the captors' call on the government to open negotiations for captives' release because they are getting sick.

"There is only one right and correct thing to do, release them immediately," Secretary Teodoro said in a press conference in Camp Aguinaldo.

"Kami ay concerned din talaga na sila ay nagkakasakit o ang kalusugan nila ay nagsa-suffer. Ngunit, ang pinalalabas ng ASG na dahil nagsa-suffer ang kalusugan ng kanilang mga bihag kailangan na makipag-negotiate ng gobyerno sa kanila, ang tingin ko ang nararapat gawin kung alam ng ASG na nagsa-suffer na ang kalusugan ng kanilang mga bihag ay pakawalan na nila kaagad ito," he added.

The defense chief said that if the government give in to the Abu Sayyaf's demand, the world would go topsy-turvy.

"Ito ay makakasanhi ng karagdagang pangkikidnap at magiging leksyon na masama para sa anti-crime efforts ng gobyerno," Secretary Teodoro said.

Secretary Teodoro issued this statement after Abu Sayyaf leader Abu Ali, in an interviewed aired over ABS-CBN, insisted that government should open negotiations for the aid workers' release because of the deteriorating health condition of Italian citizen Eugenio Vagni and Filipino engineer Marie Jean Lacaba.

The defense chief said that giving interviews to media is a tactical strategy of Abu Sayyaf to force the government into negotiating with the bandit group.

"Sa tingin ko nagiging epektibo ito kaya nga ganitong klaseng taktika na ang ginagamit nila - nagpapatawag sila ng mga tao sa mga istasyon ng radyo upang sa ganoon magbigay ng public pressure sa gobyerno na tumiklop. I think this is a tactical battle between them and us," Secretary Teodoro said.
