**Presidential Communications Operations Office**
**News and Information Bureau**

**INTERVIEW WITH PCOO ASSISTANT SECRETARY ANA MARIE BANAAG**
**BY MAEANNE LOS BAÑOS, ATTY. BRUCE RIVERA AND ATTY. JESS FALCIS – BOLJAK/DWFM**
**FEBRUARY 21, 2018 (8:57 A.M. – 9:06 A.M.)**

**LOS BAÑOS:** Asec. Marie, mukhang magandang ang inyong umaga. Sandali, ipaliwanag ninyo muna sa amin ito, mainit ito.

Ano ho ba talaga muna iyong rason bakit ho "na-ban" si Pia Rañada? Ito ho ba ay dahil sa SEC kaso nila o dahil nawala ang trust ng Pangulo sa kaniya't ayaw na siyang makita ng Pangulo? Ano ba talaga?

**ASEC. BANAAG:** Well, una, si Rappler ay na-ban sa mga events ng Malacañang kasi hindi komportable ang ating Pangulo sa ginagawa niya. She has been free naman covering the President for the longest time, pero, just the same, she editorializes the news that she is supposed to be reporting. It's just too much.

This is not saying na hindi siya puwedeng magsulat against the President kung ayaw niya ang Presidente o iyong mga pamamalakad ng ating pamahalaan. It's just that it's a discomfort for her to be attending events kung napaka-antagonistic naman niya.

**LOS BAÑOS:** Ma'am, pasensiya na ho, kailangan kong sundutin ito kasi ako ho ay isang journalist din. Ma'am, do you feel it's justified, just because hindi komportable ang Pangulo, you will ban a reporter from asking questions and from covering him?

**ASEC. BANAAG:** This is ano… this is our take on that, we have the accreditation, we have the MARO – the Media Accreditation Office of PCOO. Ngayon po, since under question naman ang personality ng Rappler, let it be resolved first, para maayos din iyong kanilang authority for covering events in Malacañang.

But ito ha, maliwanag iyong sabi ni Spokesperson Roque kahapon na she can always attend naman iyong mga press briefings sa Malacañang. They can always watch naman live.

**LOS BAÑOS:** But of course, the ambush interviews with the President, ma'am, that's very big ano … there's a difference—

**ATTY. RIVERA:** Iyon nga, iyon iyong tanong ko. Asec, Atty. Bruce po ito. Let me ask the question: If ever Rappler sends another one, aside from Pia Rañada—iyon ang tanong ko, kasi if Rappler sends another—because of course, I think that the antagonism of the President and Rappler towards… and Rañada towards each other has started already to become worse. So siguro, alam na ni Presidente, ayaw na rin siguro niya kasi, alam mo matanda, ayaw na rin niya ng parang magulong buhay.

So if Rappler sends another one, a different animal—

**ATTY. FALCIS:** Human being.

**ASEC. BANAAG:** That we don't know yet kung magkaroon man. Kasi, of course, what is in question here is the personality of Rappler.

**ATTY. FALCIS:** Asec. Banaag, sundutin ko iyon. Attorney Jess po ito.

So siyempre kasi devil's advocate tayo. Kasi sabi po ni Secretary Roque weeks ago, noong lumabas iyong SEC order, na Rappler can still cover events especially Pia Rañada dahil hindi pa po final and executory iyong SEC decision. Ngayon po, bakit po nag flip-flop na may ban?

**ASEC. BANAAG:** In fact, nakakapag-cover naman si Pia Rañada sa mga press briefing sa Malacañang. Doon sa mga events na… iyong mga events na—may mga events sa Malacañang, doon lang siya hindi puwede. So they can still write whatever they want to write. Nobody is censoring whatever their opinions are, whatever news they wanted to come up with. There's no censoring. Walang censor iyan.

**ATTY. FALCIS:** Asec. Banaag, ano po ang isusulat nila kung hindi po nila puwedeng lapitan si President at magkaroon ng Q & A?

**ASEC. BANAAG:** It's live. It's live on our media, our state media, lahat ng mga events ni Presidente. And Pia naman is free to attend the press briefings of Secretary Roque.

**ATTY. FALCIS:** In your opinion, may iba po bang journalist na antagonistic kay President? Iyong feeling ni President—

**ASEC. BANAAG:** Marami, marami naman.

**ATTY. FALCIS:** So hindi po ba sila iba-ban din?

**ASEC. BANAAG:** Hindi, hindi.

**ATTY. FALCIS:** Bakit si Pia Rañada lang?

**ATTY. RIVERA:** Kasi sa SEC nga.

**ATTY. FALCIS:** Anyway, iyon lang po. Hindi pa final and executory.

**ASEC BANAAG:** And of course, nakita naman po natin 'di ba tungkol doon kay Secretary Bong Go, iyong mga nilalabas nila na mga papel na they are making an issue out of… they're making allegations out of a piece of paper—

**ATTY. FALCIS:** Inquirer din po naglabas noon. Ma'am, Inquirer din naglabas noon.

**LOS BAÑOS:** Asec. Marie, si Meanne po ito. Pasensya na po, I hope you won't feel offended po dahil I really have to go back to the issue of sabi ninyo, Pia Rañada is a discomfort to the President.

So hindi ninyo ho—paano ba? Hindi ho ba tingin ninyo this will send a chilling effect on the other reporters? Gaya ko po, hindi naman ako Malacañang reporter, pero if I ask the President a certain question and he feels like discomfort ako sa kaniya, I will be banned?

**ASEC. BANAAG:** No, no, not at all, not at all. Ito lang ang sinasabi natin, Pia Rañada can come in sa New Executive Building, i-cover iyong mga press briefings. But then, option naman din kahit na sinong tao kung ayaw niya na magpa-interview sa ibang tao...

**LOS BAÑOS:** Tama po.

**ASEC. BANAAG:** 'Di po ba? Hindi dahil—I mean, let's give them … iyong palugit sa Presidente at kahit kaninong tao. Kung ayaw niyang magpa-interview sa journalist na ito, hindi ba okay lang din sana?

**LOS BAÑOS:** Exactly, ma'am. The President can choose not to answer Pia Ranada whenever she asks questions. Tama po iyon. Or kung mag-text si Pia, huwag kang mag-reply dahil

tingin mo wala ka ng tiwala. Pero iyong i-ban ninyo siya na i-cover iyong official events ng Pangulo, pumasok sa Malacañang Palace habang miyembro pa po siya ng Malacañang Press Corps, parang medyo foul ho yata iyan, ma'am.

**ASEC. BANAAG:** Well, that is your opinion. That is your opinion. You know, we have different takes on this matter… we have different takes on this matter and then… kung hindi komportable si Pia about it at iyong mga ibang kababayan natin, of courses, we respect that.

**LOS BAÑOS:** Yes, ma'am. And the reporters and the journalists aren't comfortable with this, ma'am, because basically this really sends a chilling effect to us na just because the President is not comfortable—

**ASEC. BANAAG:** No, no. Huwag sanang ganoon. No chilling effects, no chilling effect.

**LOS BAÑOS:** Exactly. You cannot dictate on what we will feel after what you did to Pia Ranada, Asec. Marie.

**ASEC. BANAAG:** No, no. Ito lang po: You can write whatever you wanted to write, whatever your opinions are, the President will respect that 'di po ba. And many a times, kapag may mga nagra-rally, 'di ba, pinapayagan naman ng Pangulo.

Whatever you wanted to write for or against the President, that would not be a problem and this should not have a chilling effect on anyone.

Again, the legal personality of Rappler is in question. She can cover the press briefings at Malacañang and, of course, she can write whatever she wants to write.

**ATTY. RIVERA:** Asec., I just want to put it in perspective kasi—Attorney Bruce ito. I am, you know, one of those who support President Duterte. One of the minors who support President Duterte. Ito lang po iyon. *[laughs]*

**ASEC. BANAAG:** Wala minor. Totoo iyan, nagpapasalamat kami for that.

**ATTY. RIVERA:** Of course, I have to admit I'm a minor so, you know, my opinion does not really like matter a lot. Ito lang po iyan, ito lang po ang tanong ko: Of course, hindi lang naman po Rappler iyong tumitira kay Presidente 'di ba. We know that Inquirer is one of those na tumitira talaga, are they banned?

**ASEC. BANAAG:** No, no.

**ATTY. RIVERA:** They're not 'di ba, they're not. Basically, ang tanong ko lang ay ganito: Prerogative ba ng Presidente na kapag may ayaw siyang makita, puwede niyang ayaw makita?

**ASEC. BANAAG:** Lahat naman tayo prerogative natin ito. Kahit naman hindi presidente, gaya natin, halimbawa, if we're not comfortable, halimbawa—

**ATTY. RIVERA:** Correct, correct.

**ASEC. BANAAG:** Bakit, obligado ba tayo na mag—

**ATTY. RIVERA:** Oo, in the same way na, 'di ba, in the same way na sa PCOO may mga events na, may mga bloggers ako na… kasama ninyo na ayaw kong makita, hindi ako pumupunta, tama 'di ba? Because it's my prerogative to… as a human being, even I'm the president or not, to at least man lang be happy about my life because we the pursuit to happiness. So kung may ayaw ka sa tao—

**ASEC. BANAAG:** We're in an event, I'm sorry but I have to cut you.

**ATTY. RIVERA:** Okay, thank you. At least I made my point.

**LOS BAÑOS:** Asec. Marie, salamat po sa oras ninyo ha.

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