



Republic of the Philippines
Supreme Court
Manila

EN BANC

CARMEN P. EDAÑO,

Complainant,

A.M. No. RTJ-06-1974

[Formerly OCA IPI No. 05-2226-RTJ]

-versus-

Present:

JUDGE FATIMA GONZALES-
ASDALA
STENOGRAPHER MYRLA DEL
PILAR NICANDRO,

Respondents.

AND

GESMUNDO,* C.J.,
LEONEN,** S.A.J.,
CAGUIOA,
HERNANDO,
LAZARO-JAVIER,
INTING,
ZALAMEDA,
LOPEZ, M.,
GAERLAN,
ROSARIO,
LOPEZ, J.,
DIMAAMPAO,
MARQUEZ,***
KHO, JR., and
SINGH, JJ.

Promulgated:

June 27, 2023

X

X

RESOLUTION

LOPEZ, M., J.:

* On official leave.

** Designated Acting Chief Justice per Special Order No. 2989 dated June 24, 2023.

*** No part.

J

Before the Court is a Petition for Judicial Clemency¹ filed by former Judge Fatima Gonzales-Asdala (Judge Fatima), praying that she be entitled to the benefits or reliefs under Republic Act No. 910.²

Antecedents

Judge Fatima's dismissal stemmed from a civil case for support with a prayer for support *pendente lite* filed by Carmen P. Edaña (Carmen), on behalf of her two children, against George Butler (George) then pending before Regional Trial Court of Quezon City, Branch 87 (RTC). In a handwritten letter³ dated March 28, 2005, Carmen charged Judge Fatima with grave abuse of discretion and authority, and of conduct unbecoming of a judge. She also charged Court Stenographer Myrla del Pilar Nicandro (Myrla) for usurpation of authority, grave misconduct, and unauthorized solicitations.⁴

Judge Teodoro A. Bay, then pairing judge of the RTC, ordered George to pay PHP 5,000.00 per month as support *pendente lite* to be delivered to Carmen. Subsequently, a writ of execution was issued; however, George failed to comply. Upon Carmen's motion, Judge Fatima found George guilty of indirect contempt and sentenced him to four months imprisonment and a fine in the amount of PHP 30,000.00. Consequently, a bench warrant was issued against him. But Judge Fatima reduced the fine to PHP 5,000.00 and set aside the order of imprisonment after George appeared before her on January 25, 2005.⁵

In a Decision⁶ dated July 26, 2007, the Court found Judge Fatima's private meeting with George improper since it resulted in the cancellation of the bench warrant, revocation of the order of imprisonment, and the significant reduction of fine from PHP 30,000.00 to PHP 5,000.00.⁷ The private meeting also deprived Carmen of her right to be heard. The incident disputed Judge Fatima's impartiality, independence, and integrity. Additionally, Judge Fatima willfully disregarded the Court's Memorandum approving the designation of Amy Soneja as officer-in-charge (OIC) of the RTC by designating Myrla as OIC.⁸ Considering all these and Judge Fatima's

¹ *Rollo*, pp. 481-488.

² Entitled "AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR THE RETIREMENT OF JUSTICES OF THE SUPREME COURT AND OF THE COURT OF APPEALS, FOR THE ENFORCEMENT OF THE PROVISIONS HEREOF BY THE GOVERNMENT SERVICE INSURANCE SYSTEM, AND TO REPEAL COMMONWEALTH ACT NUMBERED FIVE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SIX," approved on June 20, 1953.

³ *Rollo*, pp. 1-3.

⁴ *Edaña v. Asdala*, 555 Phil. 195, 196-197 (2007) [*Per Curiam, En Banc*].

⁵ *Id.* at 197-198.

⁶ *Id.* at 195-206.

⁷ *Id.* at 200-201.

⁸ *Id.* at 203.

previous infractions in at least four administrative cases,⁹ the Court imposed upon her the penalty of dismissal from service,¹⁰ thus:

IN VIEW WHEREOF, judgment is hereby rendered:

1. Respondent **Judge Fatima G. Asdala is found GUILTY of gross insubordination and gross misconduct unbecoming a member of the judiciary and is accordingly DISMISSED from the service** with forfeiture of all salaries, benefits and leave credits to which she may be entitled.

2. Respondent Myrla Nicandro is found GUILTY of insubordination in assuming the position and discharging the functions of OIC/Branch Clerk of Court without and in defiance of proper authority and is accordingly SUSPENDED from the service for a period of sixty (60) days, without pay, commencing on the day immediately following her receipt of a copy of this Decision, with a warning that a repetition of the same or similar acts shall be dealt with more severely. The period of suspension shall not be chargeable against her leave credits. Respondent Nicandro is likewise ordered to immediately cease and desist from discharging the functions of OIC/Branch Clerk of Court and from representing herself as such.

Respondent Nicandro is likewise REPRIMANDED for conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service and ordered to abstain from transacting with party litigants other than for official purposes.

SO ORDERED.¹¹ (Emphasis supplied)

On August 17, 2007, Judge Fatima filed a letter¹² addressed to then Chief Justice Reynato S. Puno and the Associate Justices of the Court praying for the reduction of her penalty and grant of some of the benefits and leave credits she earned in her almost 25 years of government service.¹³ Before the Court could act on the letter, Judge Fatima sent another letter¹⁴ on September 10, 2007 and reiterated her previous requests.¹⁵ The Court treated Judge Fatima's August 17, 2007 letter as a Motion for Reconsideration and issued a Resolution¹⁶ dated September 11, 2007 denying Judge Fatima's Motion but granting the release of the money equivalent to all her accrued sick and vacation leaves, to wit:

⁹ *Id.* at 203, citing *Request of Judge Fatima Gonzales-Asdala, RTC-Branch 87, Quezon City, for Extension of the Period to Decide Civil Case No. Q-02-46950 & 14 Others*, 527 Phil. 20 (2006) [Per J. Tinga, Third Division]; *Manansala III v. Asdala*, 497 Phil. 656 (2005) [Per J. Carpio-Morales, *En Banc*]; *Bowman v. Asdala*, A.M. No. RTJ-00-1546, March 6, 2000 [Notice, Second Division]; and *Dumlao, Jr. v. Asdala*, A.M. No. RTJ-99-00-1428, February 8, 1999 [Notice, First Division].

¹⁰ *Rollo*, pp. 203-206.

¹¹ *Id.* at 206.

¹² *Id.* at 214-222.

¹³ *Id.* at 221-222.

¹⁴ *Id.* at 225-229.

¹⁵ *Id.* at 228-229.

¹⁶ *Id.* at 223-224.

IN VIEW WHEREOF, the Court Resolves to DENY respondent's motion for reconsideration with FINALITY. The Court further Resolves to GRANT respondent Asdala, the money equivalent of all her accrued sick and vacation leaves. The dispositive portion of our Decision July 26, 2007 is MODIFIED accordingly.¹⁷

In a Resolution¹⁸ dated December 11, 2007, the Court ordered the Office of the Court Administrator (OCA) to retain PHP 80,000.00 from the money equivalent of Judge Fatima's accrued leave credits considering her eight other pending administrative cases.¹⁹

In another letter²⁰ dated October 13, 2011, addressed to then Chief Justice Renato C. Corona, Judge Fatima asked for the release of her retirement benefits.²¹ She also attached a Motion for Reconsideration²² and prayed that the Court reconsider its Decision dated July 26, 2007. The Court denied Judge Fatima's Motion in a Resolution²³ dated November 29, 2011.

On October 16, 2012, Judge Fatima filed another letter²⁴ dated October 10, 2012, requesting that she be given half of her retirement benefits and the return of her Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) personal contributions from July 1995 to December 1997 and January 1998 to October 2001.²⁵ In a Resolution²⁶ dated March 19, 2013, the Court found that Judge Fatima's monthly contributions from July 1995 to December 1997 were already remitted to the GSIS. Therefore, she should address her request to the GSIS. As regards the deductions from January 1998 to October 2001, the Court ruled that Judge Fatima already filed a separate case with the OCA. Thus, this issue is best threshed out in that case.²⁷

Dissatisfied with the Court's action, Judge Fatima sent another undated letter²⁸ and Petition for Judicial Clemency²⁹ dated December 12, 2018. She pleaded for this Court's mercy and compassion to grant her request for judicial clemency, so that she will be cleansed of the stigma of dismissal and be allowed to redeem herself in public.³⁰ The Court, in a Resolution³¹ dated November 17, 2020, denied Judge Fatima's Petition for Judicial Clemency.

¹⁷ *Id.* at 224.

¹⁸ *Id.* at 287.

¹⁹ See the Court's Resolution dated December 4, 2007; *id.* at 282.

²⁰ *Id.* at 293–295.

²¹ *Id.* at 294.

²² Dated September 8, 2011. *Id.* at 296–333.

²³ *Id.* at 406–408.

²⁴ *Id.* at 410–418.

²⁵ *Id.* at 417–418.

²⁶ *Edaño v. Judge Gonzales-Asdala*, 706 Phil. 528 (2013) [Per C.J. Sereno, *En Banc*].

²⁷ *Id.* at 533.

²⁸ *Rollo*, pp. 456–457.

²⁹ *Id.* at 458–461.

³⁰ *Id.* at 460–461.

³¹ *Id.* at 479.

Present Petition for Judicial Clemency

Still hopeful, Judge Fatima filed a second Petition for Judicial Clemency³² on November 10, 2021. She no longer sought the reconsideration of the Court's Decision finding her liable for gross insubordination and gross misconduct. Instead, she recognized that she was responsible for her own mistakes, regrets her reckless claim that she has the privilege to name an OIC, and asks for the Court's forgiveness.³³

In her Petition, Judge Fatima narrated that she suffered psychological and financial distress since her dismissal. Although the cash equivalent of her leave credits momentarily eased her economic burden in 2008, her husband's untimely death made things worse for her and her four children.³⁴ Her chances of getting employment outside of the Judiciary were hindered by her dismissal. She decided to engage in solo practice. Yet, she was humiliated every time she encountered someone who knew about her dismissal. These moments made her feel bitter, resentful, and hateful, but she realized that what happened to her, albeit painful, was God's way of making her a better person.³⁵

In 2013, Judge Fatima landed several short-term jobs as part-time lecturer and reviewer for police officers and graduating criminology students. She also became a senior counsel at a law firm. Consequently, she regained her self-esteem and confidence. However, the rigors of working at a law office, her advanced age, and the need to take care of her son who has a psychological disorder, forced her to resign. Nevertheless, she maintained her affiliation with the Integrated Bar of the Philippines Quezon City Chapter (IBPQC) and the Women Lawyers Association of the Philippines (WLAP) and completed her Mandatory Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) for the 7th compliance period. Occasionally, Judge Fatima gives inconspicuous donations to the Priests of the Sacred Heart and Sacred Heart Reformation House in Cagayan De Oro City.³⁶

Currently, Judge Fatima maintains an office in her residence to help the victims of abuse, poverty, viciousness, ignorance, oppression, harassment, false accusations, exploitation, and opportunism. She expresses her desire to continue her advocacies despite her age.³⁷

³² *Id.* at 481–488.

³³ *Id.* at 483.

³⁴ *Id.* at 484.

³⁵ *Id.* at 485–486.

³⁶ *Id.* at 486–487.

³⁷ *Id.* at 487.

Finally, Judge Fatima prays that she be entitled to the benefits for her 25 years and seven months of government service, so that she may not become a burden to her children in her remaining years.³⁸

The Court referred the matter to the OCA for evaluation, report, and recommendation.³⁹ In another Resolution,⁴⁰ the Court approved the OCA's conduct of the requisite fact-finding, creation of a Fact-Finding Commission (Commission), and the Commission's submission of a report.⁴¹

The Commission examined the Petition and validated the execution of the testimonials supporting Judge Fatima's Petition. The Commission also sent a letter⁴² to Carmen directing her to comment on Judge Fatima's Petition for Judicial Clemency, but Carmen refused to receive the letter. Further, the Commission required Judge Fatima to publish her Petition in at least three newspapers of general circulation.⁴³ Judge Fatima filed her compliance on November 18, 2022. She attached the affidavits of publication and the copy of the three newspapers containing the Notice to the Public and her Petition published on November 11, 14, and 15, 2022. Neither the public nor Carmen filed any comment or opposition to Judge Fatima's Petition.⁴⁴

The Commission's Recommendation

After examining the Petition and the supporting documents, the Commission found that Judge Fatima's reformation is evidenced by the testimonial given by WLAP's president, Judge Fatima's willingness to go through with the required public apology, the fact that no single case was filed against her as a member of the Bar after her dismissal, and her categorical admission that there is no one to blame for her mistakes but her. More, no one filed any comment or opposition to Judge Fatima's Petition.⁴⁵ Hence, in its Memorandum⁴⁶ dated March 21, 2023, the Commission recommended to grant Judge Fatima's Petition and release of 20% of her retirement benefits, to wit:

IN VIEW OF THE FOREGOING, it is respectfully recommended for the consideration of the Honorable Court that the petition for judicial clemency be GRANTED, and that petitioner Fatima Gonzales-Asdala be given the corresponding twenty percent (20%) of her retirement benefits as

³⁸ *Id.* at 488.

³⁹ See the Court's Resolution dated December 7, 2021; *id.* at 498.

⁴⁰ See the Court's Resolution dated July 19, 2022; *id.* at 510-511.

⁴¹ *Id.* at 510.

⁴² *Id.* at 592.

⁴³ *Id.* at 589.

⁴⁴ *Id.* at 620-622.

⁴⁵ *Id.* at 625-627.

⁴⁶ *Id.* at 619-627. Signed by Commissioner Members Mary Joy A. Lavilla-Mina and Maria Erna O. Machida. Commission Chairperson Caridad M. Mesina was on leave. Noted by OIC-OCA Legal Office Chief of Office Analiza O. Thomas-Parra. Approved by Court Administrator Raul B. Villanueva.

a sign of benevolence and judicial compassion to those who sincerely mend their ways.⁴⁷

The Court's Ruling

The Petition is partially meritorious.

Judicial clemency is the Court's extraordinary act that does not transgress existing laws and override the choice of those who have been wronged. It should, as much as possible, be based on established facts and accepted normative ethical values.⁴⁸ In resolving requests for judicial clemency, the Court laid down the following guidelines in *In re Diaz*.⁴⁹

1. There must be **proof of remorse and reformation**. These shall include but should not be limited to certifications or testimonials of the officer(s) or chapter(s) of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, judges or judges associations and prominent members of the community with proven integrity and probity. A subsequent finding of guilt in an administrative case for the same or similar misconduct will give rise to a strong presumption of non-reformation.
2. **Sufficient time** must have lapsed from the imposition of the penalty to ensure a period of reformation.
3. The age of the person asking for clemency must show that **he [or she] still has productive years** ahead of him [or her] that can be put to good use by giving him [or her] a chance to redeem himself [or herself].
4. There must be a showing of **promise** (such as intellectual aptitude, learning or legal acumen or contribution to legal scholarship and the development of the legal system or administrative and other relevant skills), as well as **potential for public service**.
5. There must be **other relevant factors** and circumstances that may justify clemency.⁵⁰ (Emphasis supplied)

The Court refined these guidelines in *In re Ong*⁵¹ and explained remorse and reformation, sufficient lapse of time to ensure reformation, and other relevant factors in this wise:

Remorse and reformation must reflect how the claimant has redeemed their moral aptitude by clearly understanding the gravity and consequences of their conduct. There is an element of reconciliation in clemencies. When there is a private offended party, there should be an

⁴⁷ *Id.* at 627.

⁴⁸ *In re Ong*, A.M. No. SB-14-21-J, January 19, 2021, <<https://elibrary.judiciary.gov.ph/thebookshelf/showdocs/1/67547>> [Per J. Leonen, *En Banc*].
⁴⁹ 560 Phil. 1 (2007) [Per J. Corona, *En Banc*].

⁵⁰ *Id.* at 5-6; citations omitted.

⁵¹ A.M. No. SB-14-21-J, January 19, 2021, <<https://elibrary.judiciary.gov.ph/thebookshelf/showdocs/1/67547>> [Per J. Leonen, *En Banc*].

attempt at reconciliation where the offender offers an apology and, in turn, the wronged gives a full and written forgiveness. Only after this reconciliation can this Court acquire jurisdiction on the plea for clemency. Where there is no private offended party, the plea for clemency must contain the public apology.

In *Concerned Lawyers of Bulacan v. Villalon-Pornillos*, this Court denied a plea of clemency that did not show any sign of repentance and acceptance of the judgment. This Court ruled that the respondent is not deserving of clemency when she still defends herself and insists on her innocence and self-righteousness. She still showed no remorse for her misdeeds even though they transpired more than eight years ago.

Again, there must be an **acknowledgment of the wrongful actions and subsequent showing of sincere repentance and correction**. This Court must see to it that the **long period of dismissal moved the erring officers to reform themselves, exhibit remorse and repentance, and develop a capacity to live up again to the standards demanded from court officers**.

This Court has also considered **other factors such as the petitioner's advanced age, deteriorating health, and economic difficulties**. For instance, in *Paredes v. Padua*, when the dismissal has already caused a **tremendous suffering to the individual** and there is a showing of dire health and financial condition, this Court lifted the penalty.

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Furthermore, there are degrees of clemency. Generally, unless for extraordinary reasons, dismissal or disbarment cannot be the subject of any kind of clemency in less than five years. **There should also be no disruption of the service**. Moreover, we must be clear which kinds of offenses are subject to various forms of clemency and the equivalent extraordinary circumstances that should be considered. This Court lifts and modifies penalties if there are **intervening factors that merit mitigation**. Penalties "are imposed not to punish but to correct offenders." Thus, when an errant officer "demonstrates [their] sincere repentance and remorse for the wrong [they] committed" and the penalty imposed has already served its purpose, judicial clemency is warranted.⁵² (Emphasis supplied)

Remorse on the part of the person asking for judicial clemency can be demonstrated by their clear understanding of the gravity and consequences of their conduct. The petitioner must acknowledge their wrongful actions. Thus, there is no remorse if the petitioner still tries to justify their conduct and insists on their innocence. Absent any remorse, there can be no reformation, regardless of the time that has lapsed from the imposition of the penalty. True reformation starts from the acknowledgment of one's wrongful conduct. From there, repentance and correction will follow.

The Court is aware of the plight of dismissed judges, disbarred lawyers, and disciplined court employees. As such, even before the promulgation of guidelines in *In re Diaz*, the Court has recognized other factors, such as

⁵² *Id.*; citations omitted.



advanced age, deteriorating health, and economic difficulties, in deciding petitions for judicial clemency and pleas for reinstatement. In *Bernardo v. Mejia*,⁵³ the Court took note of the disbarred lawyer's advanced age, sufferings, and eventual rehabilitation after his disbarment in reinstating him in the Roll of Attorneys.⁵⁴

Here, the Court, in a Decision⁵⁵ dated July 26, 2007, found Judge Fatima guilty of gross insubordination and gross misconduct. Accordingly, she was dismissed from service.⁵⁶ She repeatedly sent letters asking the Court to reconsider her dismissal. It was only in 2018 that Judge Fatima no longer questioned her dismissal and filed a Petition for Judicial Clemency.⁵⁷ She beseeched the Court's mercy and compassion to grant her request for judicial clemency.⁵⁸ However, the Court found that she fell short of meeting some of the conditions laid down in *In re Diaz* and denied her Petition in a Resolution⁵⁹ dated November 17, 2020. Undeterred, Judge Fatima filed another Petition for Judicial Clemency⁶⁰ one year after the denial of her first Petition.

It took Judge Fatima more than 10 years to accept her dismissal and acknowledge her mistakes. Since her dismissal, Judge Fatima suffered psychologically because of humiliation. Her dismissal also caused financial instability because her chances of getting employed outside the Judiciary decreased. While these circumstances made her feel bitter, resentful, and hateful, these circumstances also made her a better person. She advocated for victims of abuse, poverty, viciousness, ignorance, oppression, harassment, false accusations, exploitation, and opportunism despite her age. She has sufficiently shown remorse and reformation from the time she repeatedly questioned her dismissal until she realized her mistakes and asked for the Court's understanding. This is supported by WLAP president's testimonial:

In her own limited capacity, the former Judge Fatima G. Asdala has devoted her efforts and time to the programs and noble activities of the organization, without let up, to be of service to the public and to those who have less in life by having [m]ore in law.

We are a silent witness to the trials that the former Judge underwent, her humility, her kindness and how hard she strived to overcome the most difficult phase of her life following her dismissal from the service, as a solo parent since her husband was ambushed a year after her dismissal from service, as a lawyer, and as an ordinary civic minded citizen of the community.

⁵³ 558 Phil. 398 (2007) [Per J. Nachura, *En Banc*].

⁵⁴ *Id.* at 402.

⁵⁵ *Edaño v. Asdala*, 555 Phil. 195 (2007) [Per Curiam, *En Banc*].

⁵⁶ *Id.* at 206.

⁵⁷ *Rollo*, pp. 458-461.

⁵⁸ *Id.* at 459-461.

⁵⁹ *Id.* at 479.

⁶⁰ *Id.* at 481-488.

As we recognize with pride her focus on advocacy, her conversion and reformation, we are one in wholeheartedly believing that Former Judge Fatima G. Asdala is truly deserving of the Honorable Court's compassion and mercy and grant her petition for judicial clemency after fourteenth (14th) year from her dismissal from the service.⁶¹

The Court agrees with the Commission's findings that the WLAP president's testimonial is not pro-forma and shows Judge Fatima's reformation. While there is no reconciliation because Carmen no longer wants to participate in this case, the Court cannot ignore Judge Fatima's show of remorse and eventual reformation. The Court also notes that no administrative case was filed or is pending before the Office of the Bar Confidant after her dismissal.

Judge Fatima has shown that the process of reformation is different for every person. For some, it takes a short time for them to realize the weight and effects of their actions. For others, it takes a very long time for them to recognize the gravity and consequences of their infractions. However, it is never too late for anyone to own up to their mistakes and change for the better.

More, Judge Fatima proved that despite having an advanced age, she still has productive years ahead of her that she can put to good use. She is a member in good standing of IBPQC. Judge Fatima also completed the MCLE for the seventh compliance period, as evidenced by a Certification issued by the IBPQC Chapter.

The Court stresses that reaching the retirement age for regular employment in the government service does not dictate the mental aptitude of a disciplined judge. In *Talens-Dabon v. Arceo*,⁶² former Judge Hermin E. Arceo's (Judge Arceo) advanced age did not affect the Court's Decision to grant his Petition for Judicial Clemency considering that he can still be of service in some other capacity:

Respondent has sufficiently shown his remorse and reformation after his dismissal from the service meriting the Court's liberality. While it may be conceded that respondent at 71 years old had already reached retirement age and can no longer be eligible for regular employment in the public service, yet, considering his achievements and mental aptitude, it cannot be doubted that he could still be of service to the government in some other capacity.⁶³

But then, the Court refused to release former Judge Arceo's retirement benefits considering the gravity of his past offenses, *i.e.*, gross misconduct and immorality prejudicial to the best interest of the service for committing

⁶¹ *Id.* at 491.

⁶² 699 Phil. 1 (2012) [Per J. Perlas-Bernabe, *En Banc*].

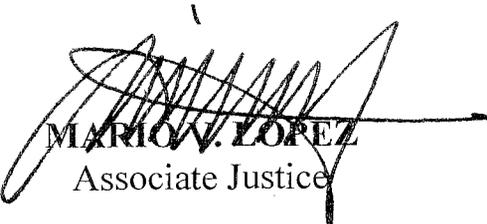
⁶³ *Id.* at 6.

lewd and lustful acts against the complainant, in deciding whether his retirement benefits should be released.⁶⁴ Meanwhile, in *Meris v. Ofilada*,⁶⁵ the Court granted the heirs of former Judge Carlos C. Ofilada a gratuity equivalent to 25% of his retirement benefits despite being found liable for two administrative cases, one for grave abuse of authority and evident partiality, and the other for gross incompetence, gross ignorance of the law, and evident partiality.⁶⁶ In the more recent case of *In re Ong*, the Court granted former Justice Gregory S. Ong one-third of his lump sum benefit and full pension. His past offenses were gross misconduct, dishonesty, and impropriety.⁶⁷

In this case, the Court found Judge Fatima guilty of gross insubordination and gross misconduct. She was dismissed from the Judiciary and the Court forfeited all her retirement benefits. But with her demonstration of remorse and reformation and the nature of her past infractions, the Court is inclined to mitigate Judge Fatima's penalty and grant her 25% of her lump sum benefits and her full pension.

ACCORDINGLY, the Petition for Judicial Clemency is **PARTIALLY GRANTED**. As a measure of mercy and humanitarian consideration, the Court grants former Judge Fatima Gonzales-Asdala her retirement benefits. She is entitled to 25% of her lump-sum benefits and her full pension, subject to the usual clearances.

SO ORDERED.


MARION V. LOPEZ
Associate Justice

WE CONCUR:

On official leave
ALEXANDER G. GESMUNDO
Chief Justice

⁶⁴ *Talens-Dabon v. Arceo*, 873 Phil. 34, 42-44 (2020) [Per J. Perlas-Bernabe, *En Banc*].

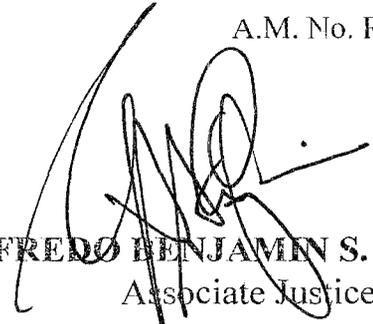
⁶⁵ 419 Phil. 603 (2001) [Per J. Betlosillo, *En Banc*].

⁶⁶ *Id.* at 608.

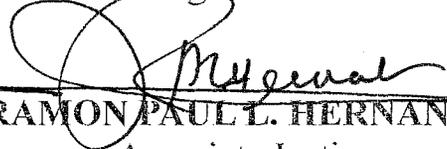
⁶⁷ *In re Ong*, A.M. No. SB-14-21-J, January 19, 2021, <<https://elibrary.judiciary.gov.ph/thebookshelf/showdocs/1/67547>> [Per J. Leonen, *En Banc*].



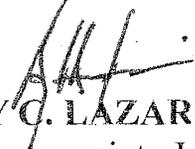
MARVIC M.V.F. LEONEN
Senior Associate Justice
Acting Chief Justice



ALFREDO BENJAMIN S. CAGUIOA
Associate Justice



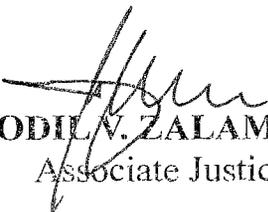
RAMON PAUL L. HERNANDO
Associate Justice



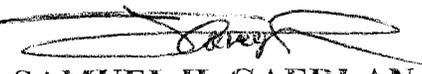
AMY C. LAZARO-JAVIER
Associate Justice



HENRI JEAN PAUL B. INTING
Associate Justice



RODIL V. ZALAMEDA
Associate Justice



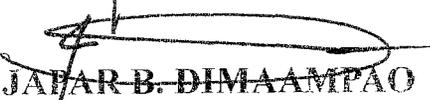
SAMUEL H. GAERLAN
Associate Justice



RICARDO R. ROSARIO
Associate Justice



JHOSEP LOPEZ
Associate Justice



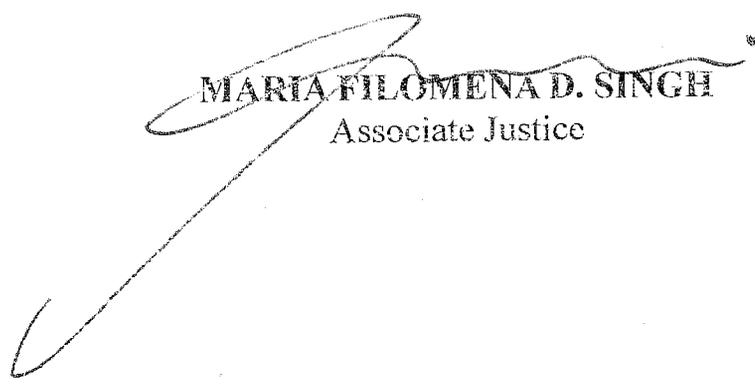
JAFAR B. DIMAAMPAO
Associate Justice

*No part due to prior participation
as Court Administrator
Midas*

JOSE MIDAS P. MARQUEZ
Associate Justice



ANTONIO T. KHO, JR.
Associate Justice



MARIA FILOMENA D. SINGH
Associate Justice