Republic of the Philippines
Supreme Court
Manila

EN BANC

Re: VERIFIED COMPLAINT OF CATALINA Z. ALILING AGAINST ASSOCIATE JUSTICE MA. LUISA C. QUIJANO-PADILLA, COURT OF APPEALS, MANILA RELATIVE TO CA-G.R. CV NO. 103042	**I.P.I. NO. 16-244-CA-J** **Present:** SERENO, *CJ.*, CARPIO, VELASCO, JR. LEONARDO-DE CASTRO, BRION,* PERALTA, BERSAMIN,** DEL CASTILLO, PEREZ, MENDOZA, REYES,** PERLAS-BERNABE, LEONEN, JARDELEZA, and CAGUIOA, *JJ.* Promulgated: September 6, 2016

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DECISION

PEREZ, *J.*:

This resolves the verified complaint[1] filed by Catalina Z. Aliling (complainant) against Justice Ma. Luisa C. Quijano-Padilla (Justice Padilla) of the Court of Appeals (CA) of Manila for gross ignorance of the law or procedure and gross misconduct constituting violations of Rules 1.01 and 3.01 of the Code of Judicial Conduct. The complaint stemmed from the Decision[2] of Justice Padilla in CA-G.R. CV No. 103042.

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* On Leave.
** On Wellness Leave.
1 *Rollo* pp. 1-20.
2 Id. at 44-60.

Antecedent Facts

On 28 October 1997, Asuncion Zamora Jurado (Jurado) and Catalina Zamora Aliling (Aliling) filed a complaint before the Regional Trial Court (trial court), Santiago City, Isabela for the determination of the true origin and ownership of a 7,086-square meter parcel of land, described as Lot No. 4900. Jurado and Aliling alleged that they, together with their deceased brother Fernando M. Zamora, are the registered owners of Lot No. 4900 covered by TCT No. T-65150 of the Registry of Deeds of Isabela. They claimed to have inherited the subject land from their father, Dominador Zamora, who holds the property under the previous title, TCT No. T-2291, after having acquired this from the previous owners, spouses Antonio Pariñas and Maura Balbin. The case was docketed as Civil Case No. 36-2438.

Jurado and Aliling alleged that sometime in 1997, they learned that defendants in the case were able to cause the subdivision of Lot No. 4900 into several titles in the names of: Vicente Chai, married to Carmen Chai; Eduardo Sarmiento, married to Josefina M. Sarmiento; Anastacio Pallermo; and Leonora Pariñas and Margarita Pariñas, married to Melecio Pinto. Claiming absolute and lawful ownership over the subject property, plaintiffs prayed for the nullification of the aforesaid titles.

After trial on the merits, the trial court rendered judgment holding, among others, that there was an irregularity in the reconstitution proceedings relative to OCT No. 3429 from which defendants' titles were derived and that defendants, particularly appellants Spouses Chai, could not be considered as purchasers in good faith.

The plaintiffs filed their Motion for Partial Reconsideration while the defendants filed their Motion for Reconsideration of the 25 February 2014 decision. The trial court denied both of their motions.

On intermediate appellate review, the CA reversed and set aside the trial court's decision in Civil Case No. 36-2438. It held that while it affirms the trial court's ruling on the irregularity of the reconstitution of OCT No. 3429, it cannot sustain the finding that appellants are not purchasers in good faith. The CA concluded that defendant Spouses Chai exercised the due diligence required of them to be rightfully adjudged as buyers in good faith. The decision was penned by Justice Padilla and concurred in by Associate Justices Normandie B. Pizarro and Samuel H. Gaerlan.

On 7 June 2016, plaintiffs-appellees Jurado, Aliling and the heirs of their brother Fernando M. Zamora, filed a Motion for Reconsideration assailing the CA decision.

Pending resolution of their Motion for Reconsideration, Aliling on 27 June 2016 filed the instant administrative complaint against Justice Padilla.

Our Ruling

Although complainant asserted that she is not assailing the CA decision in the administrative complaint, it is evident that the error she is attributing to respondent Justice Padilla pertains to the latter's ruling in CA-G.R. CV No. 103042. This Court has maintained that errors committed by a judge in the exercise of his adjudicative functions cannot be corrected through administrative proceedings, but should instead be assailed through judicial remedies.[3]

The assailed ruling of Justice Padilla was issued in the proper exercise of her judicial functions, and as such, should not be subject to administrative disciplinary action. Well entrenched is the rule that a judge may not be administratively sanctioned from mere errors of judgment in the absence of showing of any bad faith, fraud, malice, gross ignorance, corrupt purpose, or a deliberate intent to do an injustice on his or her part.[4] Judicial officers cannot be subjected to administrative disciplinary actions for their performance of duty in good faith.[5] As a matter of public policy, a judge cannot be subjected to liability for any of his official acts, no matter how erroneous, as long as he acts in good faith. To hold otherwise would be to render judicial office untenable, for no one called upon to try the facts or interpret the law in the process of administering justice can be infallible in his judgment.[6]

To be held liable for gross ignorance of the law, the judge must be shown to have committed an error that was gross or patent, deliberate or malicious.[7] In her ponencia, Justice Padilla explained, citing evidence and jurisprudence, why she arrived at her conclusion that defendants were purchasers in good faith. Even assuming that she erred in her ruling, still

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3 *Salcedo v. Caguiao*, 467 Phil. 20, 26 (2004).

4 *Ceniza-Layese v. Asis*, 590 Phil. 56, 60 (2008).

5 *Re: Complaint filed by Lucena B. Rallos against Justices Gabriel T. Ingles, Pamela Ann Maxino, and Carmelita S. Manahan*, 723 Phil. 1, 4 (2013).

6 *Crisologo v. Daray*, 584 Phil. 366, 374 (2008).

7 *Zarate v. Balderian*, 386 Phil. 1, 8 (2000) citing In *Re: Joaquin T. Borromeo*, 311 Phil. 441, 520 (1995).

complainant failed to establish that she was moved by ill-will or malicious intention to violate the law or jurisprudence. Moreover, it should be noted that it was arrived at after deliberation by a collegial body, thus, not solely the ruling of the respondent justice.

Complainant should be reminded that unfavorable rulings are not necessarily erroneous. If she disagrees with the ruling, there are judicial remedies to be exhausted under existing rules. As in fact, it was noted that complainant, together with the other plaintiffs-appellees, had already filed their motion for reconsideration of the CA decision. The CA has yet to rule on the motion when complainant filed the instant administrative complaint.

This Court has settled the rule that administrative complaints against judges cannot be pursued simultaneously with the judicial remedies accorded to parties aggrieved by the erroneous orders or judgments of the former. Administrative remedies are neither alternative to judicial review nor do they cumulate thereto, where such review is still available to the aggrieved parties and the cases not yet been resolved with finality.[8] It is only after the available judicial remedies have been exhausted and the appellate tribunals have spoken with finality, that the door to an inquiry into his criminal, civil, or administrative liability may be said to have opened, or closed.[9] Clearly, the subject civil case has not yet reached its finality and the instant administrative complaint has no leg to stand on.

WHEREFORE, in the light of the foregoing premises, the instant administrative complaint filed by Catalina Z. Aliling against Justice Ma. Luisa C. Quijano-Padilla, Court of Appeals, Manila for ignorance of the law or procedure and gross misconduct constituting violations of Rules 1.01 and 3.01 of the Code of Judicial Conduct is hereby **DISMISSED** for lack of merit.

SO ORDERED.

JOSE PORTUGAL PEREZ
Associate Justice

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8 *Rodriguez v. Gatdula*, 442 Phil. 307, 308 (2002).
9 *Flores v. Abesamis*, 341 Phil. 299, 313 (1997).

WE CONCUR:

MARIA LOURDES P. A. SERENO
Chief Justice

ANTONIO T. CARPIO
Associate Justice

PRESBITERO J. VELASCO, JR.
Associate Justice

TERESITA J. LEONARDO-DE CASTRO
Associate Justice

(On Leave)
ARTURO D. BRION
Associate Justice

DIOSDADO M. PERALTA
Associate Justice

(On Wellness Leave)
LUCAS P. BERSAMIN
Associate Justice

MARIANO C. DEL CASTILLO
Associate Justice

JOSE CATRAL MENDOZA
Associate Justice

(On Wellness Leave)
BIENVENIDO L. REYES
Associate Justice

ESTELA M. PERLAS BERNABE
Associate Justice

MARVIC M.V.F. LEONEN
Associate Justice

FRANCIS H. JARDELEZA
Associate Justice

ALFREDO BENJAMIN S. CAGUIOA
Associate Justice

CERTIFIED XEROX COPY:

FELIPA B. ANAMA
CLERK OF COURT, EN BANC
SUPREME COURT