

# GMA urged: Don't pardon Rolito Go

By NON ALQUITRAN

The family of slain engineering student Eldon Maguan appealed anew to President Arroyo not to grant executive clemency to his convicted killer Rolito Go.

"A murderer who escaped from confinement doesn't deserve to be pardoned," said Grace Maguan, the elder sister of the victim, in reaction to the pronouncement of Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez that Go's petition for executive clemency is currently being reviewed by the Department of Justice.

Go, who was convicted of murder in 1993 before the sala of Judge Benjamin Pelayo of the Pasig City Regional Trial Court (RTC), was meted a life sentence for killing Eldon, a De La Salle University engineering student, on the evening of July 2, 1991.

The Maguan family said Go has only served 12 years at the New Bilibid Prisons (NBP) in Muntinlupa.

Go was 43 years old when he shot Eldon, 25, who had just bought a pizza and was driving his car along Wilson Street in Greenhills, San Juan.

Go, who entered a one-way street, shot the victim in the head while seated inside his car.

Ms. Maguan reminded Gonzalez that Go escaped from the Rizal Provincial Jail in Pasig City three days before the promulgation of his case. He eluded authorities for three years until his capture in 1996.

"Go escaped just before promulgation of his sentence, clearly indicating his refusal to abide by the rules of the justice system. This alone should warrant a denial of his petition, which would act as reward even after his initial failed attempt to evade his arrest," the Maguan family said.

Ms. Maguan added that records showed that the convict presented false evidence during the trial.

Lawyer Jose Flaminiano, private counsel of the Maguan family, said Go is not qualified to be pardoned even if the victim's family has accepted the P3.7 million in moral and exemplary damages the court ordered him to pay the victim's family.

Flaminiano said Go, who was sentenced to *reclusion perpetua* or imprisonment for at least 30 years, is now 60 years old.

Flaminiano pointed out that under the clemency law, the mandatory age for a convict to be pardoned is 70.

The lawyer explained that under Rule 2.1 of parole, those who escaped from confinement or tried to evade sentence like Go, are disqualified from getting parole.

He also stressed that Go's petition for executive clemency has been turned down twice by President Arroyo.

In an interview, retired Judge Pelayo revealed that during the course of his duty as trial judge of the case, he received numerous threats to his life and pressure to favor Go.

"Considering the public's awareness of Go's case, the unwarranted release of the petitioner, not only in light of his crime but the continued and open disdain to the rule of law, would surely weaken the justice system's ability to deter future crimes of such senseless violence," the former judge told reporters.

Pelayo added that Go has not established "beyond all doubt that he would not continue to be a threat to society should he be granted the privilege of executive clemency."