

Arroyo orders probe of Davao death squads

President Arroyo has ordered the investigation of reported death squads in Davao City.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the allegations of Davao death squads has nurtured the false belief that the State sanctions assassinations to fight criminality.

"It is in this regard that President Arroyo has directed the Department of Interior and Local Government and the Philippine National Police to undertake all measures to get to the bottom of this issue by determining, first and foremost, the actual existence of such death squads, and by bringing perpetrators to account for their actions before the law," he said.

Ermita said the government will never tolerate much less sponsor criminal actions for any reason or at any time.

"Criminality is a social malaise that can never be remedied by such executions, which are illegal as they are immoral," he said.

Ermita said Mrs. Arroyo has called on individuals who may know of the existence of death squads to come forward and testify.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez was instructed to strengthen the Witness Protection Program to give refuge to people "who will respond to the President's call," he added.