

# DOJ indicts 11 UST fratmen in Atio hazing

By EDU PUNAY

The Department of Justice (DOJ) has indicted members of Aegis Juris fraternity over the fatal hazing of University of Santo Tomas (UST) law freshman Horacio "Atio" Castillo III in September last year.

After preliminary investigation, the DOJ found probable cause to file criminal charges against 11 members of the fraternity as it cleared 26 other respondents, including UST law dean Nilo Divina.

In a 46-page resolution released yesterday, the DOJ approved the charges of violation of Republic Act 8049 or Anti-Hazing Law against 10 frat members and another charge for perjury against another frat member.

Indicted for hazing charges were mostly officers of the fraternity - Arvin Balag (grand prefectus), Ralph Trangia (sergeant at arms), Oliver John Audrey Onofre (treasurer), Mhin Wei Chan (secundus internus), Axel Munro Hipe (master initiator), Danielle Hans Matthew Rodrigo, Joshua Joriel Macabali, Marcelino Bagtang, Jose Miguel Salamat and Robin Ramos.

No bail was recommended for all 10.

John Paul Solano, one of the witnesses in the investigation who admitted bringing Castillo to the hospital, was charged with perjury.

In a press conference, Prosecutor General Jorge Catalan Jr. said the panel led by Senior Assistant State Prosecutor Susan Villanueva based their findings on the testimony of respondent-turned-state

witness Mark Ventura, who was also present during Atio's final rites. The charge against Ventura was dismissed.

Catalan said Ventura, now in the DOJ's witness protection program, testified that Castillo came out of the fraternity's library in Sampaloc at around 2 a.m. on Sept. 17, 2017 "in a duck walk position and then he was pushed and pulled by the respective masters."

"The panel of prosecutors have come out with a resolution and in fact it was already filed before the Manila regional trial court," he told reporters.

The DOJ official said they gave credence to Ventura's testimony "because it was in detail and made in a straightforward manner."

Apart from Divina, the other frat members who were also cleared of charges were Jason Adolfo Robinos, Aeron Salientes, Ranie Rafael Santiago, Zimon Pedro, Alex Bose, Leo Lalusis, Lennert Bryan Galicia, Nathan Anarna, Chuck Siazar and Karl Matthew Villanueva.

Catalan also said that all charges against Divina and Arthur Capili in their capacities as the dean and faculty secretary of UST Faculty of Civil Law are recommended dismissed for insufficient evidence.

He explained, however, that more frat members could be

indicted as they were not named respondents in the complaints filed by the Manila Police District and Castillo's parents but were identified by Ventura.

"They will be subject of another investigation," Catalan bared, referring to Zac Abulencia, Daniel Ragos, Dave Felix, Sam Cagalingan, Alex Cairo, Luis Capulong, Kim Cyrill Roque, Ged Villanueva, Edric Pilapil and RR Magbuhos.

Sought for a comment, Divina welcomed the DOJ findings.

"I have always maintained my full innocence throughout this unfortunate incident and thankfully, this has now been established beyond question. As they say, the moral arc of the universe may be long but it bends towards justice," Divina, also a member of the fraternity, said.

"I continue to pray for justice for Atio and have full faith in our legal system," Divina added.