

DOJ to get Senate report on Dengvaxia

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The Senate committee report finding former president Benigno Aquino III criminally liable over the controversial Dengvaxia anti-dengue vaccine will be submitted to the Department of Justice (DOJ), for consideration in its resolution of charges against him.

This was formally manifested by anti-corruption groups Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption (VACC) and Vanguard of the Philippine Constitution Inc. (VPCI) in their criminal complaint against Aquino and 42 others before the DOJ investigating panel of prosecutors. The VACC and VPCI said they would submit the Senate Blue Ribbon committee report, along with their reply to the counter-affidavits of respondents, in the next hearing set for June 22. The report prepared by Sen. Richard Gordon, chairman of the Blue Ribbon, recommended the criminal prosecution of the former president for “all the tragedy, damage and possible deaths” resulting from the Dengvaxia mass vaccination program.

Apart from Aquino, the committee also found former health secretary Janette Garin and former budget secretary Florencio Abad criminally liable, as well as other officials it tagged as “primary conspirators.”

Gordon’s report added that Aquino, Garin, Abad and other government officials should be investigated and prosecuted for graft and violation of the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees.

Specifically, the committee report recommended that Aquino be charged with violation of Republic Act 3019 (Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act) and RA 6713 (Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees), citing his two meetings with vaccine manufacturer Sanofi Pasteur.

“President Aquino is guilty of malfeasance, misfeasance and nonfeasance. From the time he inappropriately met with Sanofi in Beijing on Nov. 9, 2014 and once again a year later on Dec. 1, 2015,” the report stated.

“President Aquino is the highest official of the land. By meeting with mere senior vice presidents of Sanofi Pasteur, he was sending a strong message of perception that he was dispensing undue patronage. And each time he met, the bureaucracy started acting with undue haste, losing all forms of objectivity,” it explained.

The report said Abad, on the other hand, committed “technical malversation” for releasing funds for a program that was not in the national budget.

The report was reportedly signed by 14 senators, but it has yet to be adopted by the Senate, in plenary session.

Aside from Gordon, others who signed the draft report were Senate President Vicente Sotto III, Sens. Joseph Victor Ejercito, Gregorio Honasan II, Juan Miguel Zubiri, Sonny Angara, Nancy Binay, Sherwin Gatchalian, Grace Poe, Francis Escudero, Manny Pacquiao, Ralph Recto, Cynthia Villar and Loren Legarda.