

# Private prosecutor expects guilty verdict for 3

**By Rio N. Araja**

A PRIVATE prosecutor is expecting a guilty verdict for at least three principal suspects in the Maguindanao massacre case waiting for a resolution at the **Quezon City Regional Trial Court**.

Nena Santos, a private counsel representing 38 of the 58 victims, said she was confident that former Datu Unday mayor Andal Ampatuan Jr., and his siblings—former Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao Gov. Zaldy Ampatuan and former Maguindanao Gov. Sajid Islam Ampatuan—would face conviction.

While she believes the Ampatuan brothers would get a conviction, she said she was not 100 percent sure if

all of the other respondents would be meted out a guilty verdict.

The Ampatuans are the sons of the late Maguindanao Gov. Andal Ampatuan Sr., who supposedly masterminded the deaths of the 58 victims, including 32 journalists.

Ampatuan Sr. passed away at the National Kidney and Transplant Institute in Quezon City due to a massive heart attack on July 17, 2015.

Ampatuan Jr. and Zaldy are still under detention at the Metro Manila District Jail at Camp Bagong Diwa, Bicutan in Taguig City.

Earlier, the Court of Appeals affirmed the decision of QCRTC Branch 221 Judge Jocelyn Reyes to grant bail for the provisional liberty of Sajid.

“If there would be no conviction, I

am sorry to say that press freedom in the Philippines is dead,” Santos said.

“If nobody gets to jail for killing media people, that is impunity. Where is democracy? Where is press freedom?” she asked.

The victims were on their way to the Commission on Elections on Shariff Aguak to file the certificate of candidacy of then Buluan Vice Mayor Esmael Mangudadatu for the gubernatorial race in 2010 when armed men blocked their way, killed and even buried others alive on Nov. 23, 2009.

Ten years after the massacre, Reyes submitted the multiple counts of murder raps against the Ampatuans and the other accused for resolution and promulgation.