



**WAITING FOR JUSTICE** Huge banners are strung at the National Press Club building in Manila as members of the media await the court's verdict on the Maguindanao massacre case. PHOTO BY RENE H. DILAN

## Return Zaldy Ampatuan to jail, RTC judge orders

THE Quezon City Regional Trial Court has ordered Zaldy Ampatuan, one of the principal accused in the 2009 Maguindanao massacre, returned to Camp Bagong Diwa in Taguig City two days before the decision on the case is released.

Branch 221 Judge Jocelyn Solis-Reyes said in her order, dated December 16, that there was no longer any need for Ampatuan to remain in the hospital.

Ampatuan was brought to the Taguig Pateros District Hospital on October 21 when he suffered a stroke.

He was thereafter transferred

to the Makati Medical Center in Makati City and was confined at the Cardiovascular Intensive Care Unit. Ampatuan asked for the extension of his confinement.

But the court said his rehabilitation procedure could be done while he was in detention.

Solis-Reyes directed the jail warden of Quezon City Jail-Annex in Camp Bagong Diwa to immediately transport Ampatuan to the detention facility.

Solis-Reyes also denied Ampatuan's motion to bring in two additional lawyers during the

court's verdict on Thursday, citing limited space in the courtroom.

"All private prosecutors and their clients, heirs of the victims, are enjoined to limit the number of counsel[s] who will attend the promulgation day, to one per client. This likewise applies to all the defense counsels," she said.

Ampatuan, a former governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, are among the 100 accused facing murder cases for the massacre of 58 persons.

The victims were killed while on their way to file a certificate of can-

didacy for Esmael Mangudadatu, vice mayor of Buluan town, in the 2010 national elections.

Andal Jr. is still in jail, while Sajid Ampatuan is out on bail and is currently the mayor of Shariff Saydona Mustapha town in Maguindanao.

Andal Sr., father of the Ampatuans and the alleged mastermind of the crime, died of a heart attack in 2015.

The Maguindanao massacre verdict will be handed down on Thursday, December 19, after 10 years of trial.

**FRANZ EMBUDO**