

QC-PLEB demotes 2 policemen

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TWO policemen have been demoted by the Quezon City- People's Law Enforcement Board (QC- PLEB) for grave misconduct.

Mayor Josefina "Joy" Belmonte announced that Patrolmen Zaldy Mejos Jr. and Julie Boison were demoted one- rank lower for unlawful arrest and search without proper warrants. A certain Marissa Torres said the two policemen searched her house and arrested her without proper warrants on January 19 last year. Mejos and Boison claimed "plain view doctrine" to justify their action.

They said they were on foot patrol in the vicinity of Torres' residence when they received a report that the complainant had a gun.

Boison claimed that he noticed a nozzle of a suspected firearm in a black sling bag inside Torres' sari- sari store, prompting them to enter the house and conduct the search. The policemen alleged that they found a gun and illegal drugs. Hence, they arrested Torres. The complainant, however, claimed the gun and the illegal drugs were not hers but were merely planted evidence.

The QC- PLEB sided with Torres, saying warrantless arrest, search and seizure done by the respondent policemen cannot be justified under the plain view doctrine.

In its decision, the QC- PLEB said the plain view doctrine applies when the discovery of evidence is "inadvertent."

"We have no agenda but to dispense justice. Constitutional rights are there to be upheld," QC- PLEB Executive Officer Rafael Calinisan said.

Meanwhile, Belmonte called on fellow local chief executives to reorganize their respective PLEBs to provide an existing check and balance mechanism to hold erring policemen accountable for their acts.

Calinisan, for his part, appealed to lawmakers to review Republic Act 9708, which allows the promotion of police officers who have pending administrative cases with the PLEB.

"To strengthen the check and balance mechanisms and to help weed out rotten eggs in the uniformed service, no policeman with pending administrative cases should be promoted," Calinisan said.