

Prolonged strict quarantine measures may lead to 'social unrest' — Belmonte

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Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte warned that social unrest may arise should the government prolong the implementation of strict quarantine rules in the country.

Belmonte on Friday, May 7, said she is in favor of easing quarantine restrictions, especially in cities like Quezon City, "which is very, very big," as social unrest may be triggered by hunger and poverty.

"I'm open to (easing quarantine rules)... We always say that we have to balance health and economy. But in a city like Quezon City, which is very, very big, we have another problem that I'd like to raise: the issue of social unrest," Belmonte said in a forum hosted by the National Press Club of the Philippines.

The mayor said that the unrest that recently happened, which was caused by racial tension in the United States, may also occur in the Philippines.

"Sa atin wala namang racial tensions, pero maaring magkaroon ng problema kung yung tao labis na nagugutom o kaya labis na hirap na hirap sa kanyang buhay (We don't have racial tensions here. But social unrest may be triggered by excessive hunger or difficulties being experience by people)," she said.

Belmonte is thankful for the emergence of community pantries as they temporarily supply the provisions for those affected by the lockdown, but warned that such initiative may not last long.

"Pero at the end of the day, dadating din ang panahon na magkakaroon yan ng donor fatigue (But the time will come when there will be donor fatigue)," she said.

"Kung di pa tayo pumayag na mas marami ang magkaroon ng hanapbuhay at trabaho, baka mas lumala pa ang problema, yung tinatawag nating social unrest (If we still don't allow more people to go back to work, we may face a far worse problem which is social unrest)," she added.

A year after the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Philippines was placed again under the most stringent quarantine measure due to the surge in infections as compared to last year.

According to economic managers, millions of Filipinos were rendered jobless. This was caused mainly by the closure of many businesses due to the lockdowns.