Belmonte: Speaking up not inciting to sedition

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Speaking the truth is not against the law, an opposition congressman told his colleagues in the House of Representatives on Tuesday night.

"Last I checked, the truth is still the truth and is not inciting to sedition. Last I checked, speaking up is not prohibited...it is part of our duty as citizens to insist on what is right, to debate even with government so it could make meaningful decisions," Quezon City Rep. Christopher Belmonte said in a privilege speech.

Belmonte is House deputy minority leader and secretary general of the opposition Liberal Party, which is chaired by Vice President Leni Robredo.

His speech was his way of defending Robredo from sedition, libel and other criminal charges the Philippine National Police (PNP) has filed against her and other opposition personalities in connection with the so-called "Ang Totoong Narcolist" videos.

In the videos, Peter Joemel Advincula, introducing himself as "Bikoy," initially claimed that members of President Duterte's family were allegedly involved in illegal drugs.

On May 23, Advincula appeared with PNP officials in a news conference and changed his story.

He instead accused opposition leaders of supposedly conspiring to oust President Duterte.

Belmonte said Advincula's accusations were "fictitious and initiated by a few misguided sycophants who would rather destabilize the government and push their own personal agendas rather than work to uplift the lives of the Filipinos."

He urged his colleagues to prioritize the people's needs over politics.

"Our goal is not to follow this or that marching order because there are no marching orders higher than that of the Filipino people's," Belmonte said.

He appealed to his colleagues to approve bills that would benefit the greater majority of the people.

"There are pending bills on higher compensation for teachers, nurses and other healthcare workers, measures on housing and proposals to create more job opportunities," he said.