QC RTC arraigns two accused in Maguindanao massacre case

By Rey E. Requejo

THE Quezon City Regional Trial Court will arraign today, Jan. 21 the two accused in the Maguindanao massacre who were arrested early this month or a few weeks after it sentenced to reclusion perpetua without parole eight Ampatuan clan members and 20 others for the murder of 58 people, including 32 journalists in 2009.

Assistant State Prosecutor Michael John Humarang, a member of the prosecution team handling the Maguindanao massacre case, identified the accused as Kagi Faizal and Gambayan Kasim.

Faizal and Kasim, who were among the 80 accused in the multiple murder case who were still at large, will be arraigned before the sala of Quezon City RTC Branch 221 Presiding Judge Jocelyn Reyes, who is handling the Maguindanao massacre case.

The two are now detained at the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology facility in Camp Bagong Diwa, Taguig City after being transferred from Maguindanao following their arrest last Jan. 6 and 9, respectively.

Faizal and Kasim are facing 57 counts of murder for slaughtering 57 people, including 32 journalists 10 years ago.

A total of 197 were initially charged of multiple murder in connection with the massacre, including 15 individuals belonging to the influential Ampatuan clan but only 117 were arrested while 80 others remained at large until now.

The Maguindanao massacre, which is considered as the worst in recent Philippine history—took place on Nov. 23, 2009 in Sitio Masalay, Buluan town in Maguindanao.

The victims were part of a convoy carrying family members, supporters and journalists and were on their way to file his certificate of candidacy in Shariff Aguak.

The journalists were invited by then Buluan Vice Mayor and now Maguindanao 2nd District Rep. Esmael Mangudadatu Esmael Mangudadatu to cover the scheduled filing of his COC at the Commission on Elections provincial office in Shariff Aguak.

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