

SCHONBRUN DESIMONE SEPLOW  
HARRIS HOFFMAN & HARRISON LLP

Benjamin Schonbrun  
V. James DeSimone  
Michael D. Seplow  
Wilmer J. Harris  
Paul L. Hoffman  
Genie E. Harrison  
Supreeta Sampath  
Victoria Don  
Amanda R. Canning  
Courtney Abrams

723 Ocean Front Walk  
Venice, CA 90291  
(310) 396-0731 (310) 399-7040 (fax)  
www.sdshh.com

Of Counsel  
Erwin Chemerinsky  
\*Illinois and Dist. Columbia  
Adrienne J. Quarry  
John Raphling

Pasadena Office  
715 Fremont Avenue  
Suite A  
Pasadena, CA 91030  
(626) 441-4129  
(626) 283-5770 (fax)

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Press Statement, Roxas Submission to Special Rapporteur on Torture

I am Victoria Don, one of a team of attorneys and law students who worked with torture survivor Melissa Roxas to prepare this Submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, submitted August 25, 2011. Ms. Roxas has pursued domestic remedies in the Philippines to no avail. At this point little recourse exists but to turn to international mechanisms in order to seek justice.

This communication, detailing her ordeal, has been submitted to the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Professor Juan Méndez. As Special Rapporteur Professor Méndez bears a specific mandate from the United Nations Human Rights Council, the inter-governmental body tasked with protecting human rights world-wide. This mandate is to "examine, monitor, advise and publicly report" on human rights problems through activities including responding to individual complaints.<sup>1</sup>

Ms. Roxas's complaint requests that the Special Rapporteur call upon the Philippine government to perform the following 4 actions:

1. Provide his office with copies of all records and other information pertaining to investigations conducted by any Philippine government entity of Ms. Roxas's abduction, detention, and torture;

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<sup>1</sup> See Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, *available at*:  
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/chr/special/index.htm#code>

2. Fully cooperate and ensure the full cooperation of the Armed Forces of the Philippines in an investigation to determine the identity of Ms. Roxas's torturers, including full access to Fort Magsaysay, the suspected location of her torture, and providing copies of all relevant documents, including entry and exit records and rosters of all Armed Forces personnel present at the fort during Ms. Roxas's abduction;
3. Investigate and prosecute all those responsible for Ms. Roxas's ordeal, including any members of paramilitary groups, soldiers, military officers, and elected officials all the way up the chain of command; and,
4. Provide Professor Méndez an invitation to undertake a country visit to assist the government in identifying the causes of torture in cases such as Ms. Roxas's, to offer practical solutions to end the use of torture and other human rights abuses, and ensure that the behavior of the Philippine Armed Forces and other forces comply with international standards against torture and abuse.

We would like to thank Ms. Roxas for her courage in pursuing solutions to torture and human rights violations in the Philippines and world-wide, as well as the attorneys and law students who worked on this Submission.