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Amid 'authoritarian' label, palace says rule of law still prevails

By [philstar.com](#) - March 31, 2018

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[Alexis Romero](#) (philstar.com) – March 31, 2018 – 2:37pm

MANILA, Philippines — Malacañang on Saturday disputed United Nations Special Rapporteur Victoria Tauli-Corpuz's claim that the Philippine government has become authoritarian as it insisted that rule of law still prevails in the country.

Corpuz, who has been labeled a terrorist by the Duterte administration, recently urged Italians to help stop what she described as the "fascism" in the Philippines.

Speaking to delegates of the Human Rights Festival in Milan last March 25, Corpuz said the "authoritarian" government in the Philippines is controlling Congress and is going against institutions formed to balance the executive branch.

Corpuz cited the impeachment filed against Chief Justice Maria Lourdes Sereno and the arrest and detention of Sen. Leila de Lima, a vocal critic of President Rodrigo Duterte's war on illegal drugs. Sereno has been accused of failing to file her statements of assets, liabilities and net worth for several years and misusing public funds, among other allegations. De Lima, meanwhile, was jailed over drug-related charges but the senator claimed to be a victim of political persecution.

Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea refuted Corpuz's claims, saying her statements show "how detached she is with the realities happening in the Philippines." He also claimed that the executive branch does not interfere with the affairs of the judiciary and the legislature.

"Democracy in the Philippines is vibrant and strong. All the branches of the government are functioning and the rule of law thrives," Medialdea said in a statement.

"The executive branch respects the separation of powers and the independence of the other co-equal branches and doesn't meddle with their affairs," he added.

Corpuz and about 600 other persons were tagged as terrorists by the government after Duterte scrapped the peace negotiations with communist rebels.

The Justice department has asked the Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 19 to declare Corpuz and 600 others as terrorists as required by the Human Security Act of 2007. Under the law, the justice department should file a petition asking the court to declare a person or a group as terrorists.