

**Filipino columnist says Aquino acting like Malaysia spokesman**  
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KUALA LUMPUR, March 4 — A Filipino newspaper columnist has hinted that Philippine President Benigno Aquino 3rd is acting like he is a spokesman for Malaysia from his comments over the Sulu siege in Sabah.

Columnist Rigoberto D. Tiglao of The Manila Times, in an article, said that given Aquino's stance, he said Malaysia should confer one of its honorific titles that can be given to foreigners like a Datukship.

Tiglao said that when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak told the militants that there would be "no compromise; either they surrender or face the consequences", Aquino (picture) on his part announced "surrender now, without conditions."

"Check out everything Aquino said since the crisis broke out in February 13—and you can easily do this in this day and age through the Internet—and you will realise that he never made even the vaguest reference that the Philippines claims Sabah as its territory and that is the root of the crisis.

"He never even mentioned that the Sulu sultan's and his people firmly believe that Malaysia has land-grabbed his clans' century old homeland. His spokesmen even in effect dismissed the Sabah claim as passé," Tiglao wrote.

Sulu Sultan Jamalul Kiram 3rd's band of rebels in Sabah has defied warnings from both the Malaysian and Philippine authorities to leave Sabah, or else, resulting in clashes which have left casualties on both sides.

Tiglao wrote that Aquino and his officials even read the rebels the riot act, that they'd be charged for advocating war (according to Aquino), for inciting people to rebellion (according to Justice Secretary Leila de Lima), or for violating the election ban on carrying firearms (according to police chief Alan Purisima).

"Aquino's officials dutifully followed his propaganda line, with his spokespersons virtually dismissing our Sabah claim, practically speaking as Malaysian deputy spokesmen," the columnist wrote.

"The worst statement — or the best, if you consider it as a Malaysian one — came from Cabinet Secretary Rene Almendras, who said the other day: 'The President's statement is very clear ... If this happened to you ... if you had a house and then somebody comes in to your house, armed, how would you react?' Mr Almendras got his analogy reversed. Kiram should retort: 'If you just leased your house and the tenant refuses to give it back to you and brandishes his arms, how would you react?'," Tiglao wrote.

He also said Almendras' analogy was exactly that of Najib, who has repeatedly referred to the sultan's men as "Filipino intruders" and "Sulu gunmen."

"Like Aquino, the prime minister has never mentioned to the sultan's claims over Sabah," he said.

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