

Philippine court orders arrest of Imelda Marcos

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A **Philippines** anti-corruption court today issued a warrant for the arrest of the country's former first lady, Imelda Marcos, over corruption charges relating to the alleged laundering of hundreds of millions of dollars in government funds.

The four charges against Mrs Marcos stem from the 1970s, when she was minister of human settlements and her late husband, Ferdinand Marcos, was president.

They relate to allegations Mrs Marcos laundered \$352m of "ill-gotten gains" during her time in office, court documents say.

The case has been treated as corruption as no money laundering law existed at the time of the alleged financial transfers.

But the 72-year-old widow, wearing diamond earrings, appeared briefly at the Sandiganbayan anti-graft court in Manila this morning and posted \$2,400 bail to avoid spending time in jail.

Mrs Marcos, who denies all charges, rode to court today in a chauffeur driven limousine and refused police assistance as she fingerprinted herself, dipping her fingers in ink and rolling them on a blotter.

"Once again this is pure and simple harassment," she told reporters waiting at the court. "It is so inhuman. It's a persecution of 16 years. So relentless, so cruel."

The charges are part of a much wider case against Mrs Marcos on allegations she and her husband plundered the Philippine economy while in power between 1976-86.

The flamboyant 72-year-old widow, whose notoriously lavish shopping habits turned her into a symbol of excess, has been facing the charges for several years.

Amid allegations of widespread human rights abuses and corruption, her husband was toppled and driven into exile by the 1986 revolution that ended his two decades in power.

Marcos' successor, Corazon Aquino, accused him of stealing billions of dollars and ordered many of his assets to be seized.

He died in Hawaii in 1989 and his wife returned to the Philippines in 1990 and twice ran unsuccessfully for president. More than \$629m in the Marcos' Swiss bank deposits have been transferred to an escrow account in Manila pending determination of its real owners.

Investigators are still working to track down other suspected accounts.