# Loyalty to nation, not Sara Duterte

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And so the die is cast—the House of Representatives has crossed the Rubicon by moving to evict Vice President Sara Duterte from office.

On the last session day before the midterm elections, more than 200 House members endorsed the impeachment complaint against Duterte, sending the case directly to the Senate for trial and burning all bridges with the country’s second top official and her powerful family.

It was a decision fraught with peril and promise.

That the first signatory was the President Marcos’ son, Senior Deputy Majority Leader and Ilocos Norte Rep. Sandro Marcos, and the last was the President’s cousin, Speaker and Leyte Rep. Martin Romualdez, was not only symbolic, it was a signal that left no doubt as to whose imprimatur made this once preposterous chess move a reality. Moreover, it dealt the death blow to any chance of reconciliation for the doomed alliance known as “UniTeam.”

The complaint accused the Vice President of culpable violation of the Constitution, bribery, graft and corruption, betrayal of public trust, and other high crimes, including her alleged misuse of up to P612.5 million in confidential fund earmarked for her office and the Department of Education from 2022 to 2023.

## Tyrannical abuse of power

“Respondent Duterte’s conduct throughout her tenure clearly displays gross faithlessness against public trust and a tyrannical abuse of power that, taken together, showcases her gross unfitness to hold public office and her infidelity to the laws and the 1987 Constitution,” the complaint read in part.

Duterte allegedly engaged in acts aimed at destabilizing the Marcos administration, such as her boycott of the 2024 State of the Nation Address and declaring herself “designated survivor”; attending rallies calling for the President’s resignation; obstructing congressional investigations; and disclosing that she had arranged the assassination of the President, his wife Liza Araneta-Marcos, and Romualdez, in retaliation for a hypothetical plot against her life.

All these “do not only cast doubt as to her capability and fitness to continue serving under the same body politic she so criticizes, it also strongly evinces a betrayal of the trust imposed upon her by the public and the dignity required of her office,” according to the complaint.

Neither Duterte nor her father, former president Rodrigo Duterte, gave an immediate comment, except for a cryptic statement from the former, saying; “God save the Philippines.”

But the reactions of their family members and allies came fast and furious.

## ‘Cornered animals’

Her brother, Davao City Rep. Paolo Duterte, said he was “appalled and enraged by the desperate and politically motivated efforts to railroad the impeachment” of the Vice President. From another brother, Davao City Mayor Sebastian Duterte, came a veiled threat: “Cornered animals become aggressive, Martin Romualdez, Bongbong Marcos.”

Salvador Panelo, chief legal counsel during the Duterte administration, said the Vice President “will face the impeachment—smilingly, courageously and competently.”

Meanwhile, the Senate adjourned its own session on Wednesday without taking up the articles of impeachment. The next day, Senate President Francis Escudero said the earliest his chamber could take action on the impeachment complaint was June 2, upon the resumption of Congress after the May 12 elections.

Which means Duterte’s political future will likely be decided by newly elected or reelected senators in the 24-member chamber, unless the President calls a special session to start the process “forthwith,” as the Constitution states.

On Thursday, he expressed openness to that idea.

## Pivotal moment

And so, the Senate will face a pivotal moment. Once the senators don their robes as judges—with select House members leading the prosecution—the chamber must meet the public’s expectations of keeping proceedings orderly and professional. The trial must remain focused solely on facts and evidence, free from histrionics and grandstanding.

The gravity of the charges requires that all senator-judges, especially Duterte’s staunch allies, set aside their political affiliations to be able to weigh every piece of evidence with seriousness and rationality.

Duterte will get her day in court. But it is not the time nor the place for her usual tactics of blanket denials and empty threats. She must use the moment to present a full and honest defense of her actions, with no evasion nor prevarication. No amount of partisan theatrics should detract from the most critical questions: Did she abuse her power? Did she misappropriate public funds? Did she violate the public trust?

Hence, the task of the Senate impeachment court is clear—to decide the Vice President’s fate with impartiality and an unflinching commitment to truth and justice. This is a moment for statesmanship, not subservience. The loyalty of every senator must be to the nation, not to Sara Duterte.