



## **NATIONAL CITIZENS' MOVEMENT FOR FREE ELECTIONS (NAMFREL)**

Room 601, DMG Center, Domingo M. Guevara St.,  
Barangay Mauway, Mandaluyong City 1550  
Philippines

Telefax: +63 (2) 8470-4151  
Wireless Landline: +63 (2) 8736-0969; 8788-3484  
Telephone: +63 (2) 8451-1586  
Mobile No.: +63 939.1102872; 977.2417080  
E-Mail: [secretariat@namfrel.org.ph](mailto:secretariat@namfrel.org.ph)  
Website: [www.namfrel.org.ph](http://www.namfrel.org.ph)

### PRESS STATEMENT

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### **Instead of postponing elections, let us make sure that they happen, even during a pandemic**

NAMFREL today emphasized the importance of holding the 2022 elections as scheduled, as mandated by the Philippine Constitution, despite the pandemic. This is in response to Pampanga 2nd District Rep. Mikey Arroyo's suggestion for the Comelec to consider postponing the 2022 elections.

Postponing the elections violates the Constitution, contravenes the principle of regularity in the conduct of an election, extends the terms of elected officials without being elected anew, and deprives the electorate of seeking accountability from elected officials through the ballot.

While Congressman Arroyo's concerns are reasonable, preparations are currently being done by the Comelec and other stakeholders to ensure a free, fair, and safe 2022 elections. The Comelec has already put in place some guidelines to make election processes, such as voters' registration, more efficient and safe, and it said that it is also trying to explore other ways to make sure that other processes in the election cycle would have the safety of stakeholders in mind. The onus is now on the Comelec to prove that it can be done, to invite confidence from the public and from polling staff that they would not be exposed to infection if they go out to vote or do their poll duties in 2022.

Some of our Asian neighbors, like South Korea, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and Taiwan, have also shown that it is possible to hold elections during this pandemic. The Philippines should learn from their experiences, and see what could be applied to our setting.

NAMFREL calls on election stakeholders and the public in general to uphold our commitment to preserve our democratic institutions and Constitutional rights. Concrete ways to show our commitment is to make sure that we are registered to vote, and to keep ourselves informed and educated on issues that could affect our right to vote. Elections are sacred. They are an expression of the people's collective will through the ballot. Instead of postponing elections, let us all work together to make sure that they happen, even during a pandemic. ###