

## ***Trouw***

Wednesday 10 October 2007

- Filipino opposition leader: Of course this is a political charge

### **'Adviser' Sison calls Justice Ministry a puppet of the Philippines**

interview

Bart Zuidervaart



Jose Maria Sison woont sinds 1986 in Nederland.

PHOTO: NICHOLAS

The Filipino opposition leader Sison remains suspect of connection with the murder attack in his birth place, despite his release

Jose Maria Sison (68) is visibly relieved. His answers are interspersed by happy notes, now and then he laughs exuberantly. He does not resemble someone who is afraid of a long prison sentence.

But Sison was really oppressed by his two-week detention in the prison in Scheveningen. But since the court of first instance in The Hague on 13 September ordered his release and the appeals court last week sided with it, the case is practically finished, he himself says.

The Openbaar Ministerie however continues to see the Filipino opposition leader as the person who from the Netherlands ordered in 2003 and 2004 the murder of two former political colleagues in the Philippines. "Nothing changes regarding his status as suspect," says a spokesperson of the National Prosecutor. "The investigation simply continues."

Sison established in 1968 the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), including a military arm, the New People's Army (NPA). The two murders would have been committed by the NPA. Since Sison left the country in 1986, he has lived in exile in the Netherlands. His asylum request has been rejected, but going back is too dangerous, so he cannot be deported.

The National Democratic Front (NDF) from its office in Utrecht carries on peace talks with the regime of President Arroyo in the name of seventeen parties. Among them also are the CPP and the NPA. Sison calls himself just an “adviser of the NDF.”

With that he plays down his political role, says not only the OM but also the judicial power. According to the appeals court the dossier contains “numerous indications that the suspect during the many years (...) continues to play if not as chairman then a prominent role within the CPP.”

Sison denies that strongly. “The Philippine regime likes to identify me as a communist leader. That makes the movement especially ridiculous; a chairman who lives long years in the Netherlands.

The court of first instance and the appeals court in that same dossier sees “no concrete indications” that can bring Sison in direct connection with the two murders. So he became free last month.

Noteworthy is that Sison recently in the Philippines found himself accused of the same matter as now in the Netherlands. He was in the beginning of this year acquitted of it. “It was a weak case,” claims Sison. “Not a single direct evidence, much hearsay. But what happens after? The Justice Ministry in the Netherlands uses the same dossier. I said to the people of the OM during the hearing: “You are made to pull the cart of the Philippines. It seems as if they never even knew of the Philippine case. They even asked for a copy of the decision!” A burst of laughter follows.

The OM disputes that there is cooperation between the two countries. The Netherlands indeed has sent last year investigators to the country for statements of witnesses against Sison. Of which the appeals court says in its decision that these “are simply not reliable.” And the facts presented in the dossiers have “perhaps a political context.”

Sison sees in the decision confirmation of a suspicion: “Of course this is a political charge.” He refers to a text in the website of the ministry of foreign affairs which states: “The trade relations between the two countries have been intensive for years. The Netherlands is one of the biggest foreign investors in the Philippines.” And further: “The only hindrance for Dutch-Filipino relations is formed by the stay of the leadership of the communist resistance in Utrecht.”

“In fact,” says Sison, “the Netherlands admits with this that here plays other interests. I disturb the good relations. They find me obviously a burden.”