Statement from Faculty Members of the University of the Philippines School of Economics

We deplore in the strongest terms the violence perpetrated last Wednesday, September 17, by a group of protesters against Secretary Florencio B. Abad outside the U.P. School of Economics auditorium.

Secretary Abad was leaving a just-concluded forum organized by the University Student Council. His way to a waiting vehicle, however, was blocked several times by protesters, who not only shouted slogans and invectives—par for the course at U.P.—but actually assaulted him by throwing placards and metal coins and physically laying hold of him, grabbing his clothing to prevent him from leaving.

What is worse, some student “leaders” thought nothing of gloating about the incident and celebrating their hooliganism in mainstream and social media, as if it were some kind of victory. This incident is not a victory but a blow to UP’s honor.

By participating in these events the protesters have declared themselves enemies, not of Secretary Abad, but of the University itself. As an invited guest, Secretary Abad was covered by the same blanket of academic freedom and safe passage that the University guarantees to all who set foot on campus. The purpose of that high privilege is to guarantee a free traffic in diverse ideas—and of the diverse people who espouse them—which is the lifeblood of a liberal academic institution. Those who violate that security and privilege by resorting to physical threats and violence sow apprehension and fear among bearers of contrary and unfashionable ideas, who would henceforth shy away from participating in the University, resulting in an impoverishment of intellectual life and a reduction of debate to a monologue among the already-converted.

The acts of Wednesday’s protesters, therefore, not only violated decency and courtesy, they were an assault on the University itself.

To remove this blot on the University’s reputation:

We enjoin those who participated in the dishonorable events of last Wednesday—but who were possibly misled or sincerely unaware of the gravity of their acts—to come forward, own up to their participation, and proffer a public apology to Secretary Abad and to the University.
We call upon the University Student Council and other student organizations responsible for organizing the event to publicly dissociate themselves from the actions of Wednesday's hooligans;

We enjoin the University authorities to begin an inquiry to identify those ultimately responsible for the violence, and who cynically staged the incident, applying penalties, wherever necessary;

We call on the University authorities henceforth to enhance the security provided to invited visitors of the University to prevent a repeat of the said incident.

Finally, we call for a renewed discussion and clarification among faculty, staff and students, of the University's unwritten rules of free speech and safe passage, to ensure that the University remains a free and fearless field for ideas, where debates are won not by assault but by argument, not by shouting down but by speaking up.

SIGNED

Prof. Rosa M. Alonso i Terme
Prof. Maria Joy V. Abrenica
Prof. Ruperto P. Alonzo
Prof. Agustin L. Arcenas
Prof. Romeo Matthew T. Balanquit
Prof. Joseph J. Capuno
Prof. Fidelina N. Carlos
Prof. Ramon L. Clarete
Prof. Rolando A. Danao
Prof. Sarah Lynne S. Daway
Prof. Emmanuel S. de Dios
Prof. Emmanuel F. Esguerra

Prof. Raul V. Fabella
Prof. Aleli D. Kraft
Prof. Cielo D. Magno
Prof. Maria Nimfa F. Mendoza
Prof. Solita Collas-Monsod
Prof. Toby Melissa C. Monsod
Prof. Marjorie C. Pajaron
Prof. Stella Luz A. Quimbo
Prof. Majah-Leah V. Ravago
Prof. Renato E. Reside
Prof. Gerardo P. Sicat