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OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

A Call for Courage and Common Decency Michael L. Tan, Chancellor, UP Diliman 23 November 2018

Late last night and into the early hours today, my vice-chancellors and I have been receiving reports of heightened tension in UP Diliman, following social media posts claiming that the handler of a Twitter account called IskoSpeak, had been abducted, and then released with injuries inflicted on him by the abductors.

The alleged victim has not made statements of his own. Neither has he made a physical appearance, but the social media posts have turned viral, including claims that the abduction was retaliation for his having posted leaked screenshots of postings – attributed to Upsilon Sigma Phi – expressing rage and threats against LGBTs, women, Muslims and lumads. The postings came after protests from LGBT groups against homophobic slurs, caught on video, during the violence between Upsilon Sigma Phi and Alpha Phi Beta last week.

Accompanying the alleged abduction of the Twitter handler has been a posting, again laced with misogynist profanities, hurling threats to harm the girlfriend of the Twitter handler.

In the light of these events, there have been calls to suspend classes, but the administration will not be doing this because to do so is to walk right into the trap laid out by, and I cannot think of a term except “terrorists”, people want to intimidate UP Diliman and hold us hostage to fear.

While our security forces have been on red alert since last week, we will be deploying more security guards and SSBs especially in hot spot areas such as the frat tambayans and colleges with large frat memberships.

We continue to carry on the initiatives started last week, which is to get all the facts around the violence, including the physical encounters as well as the social media postings, leading to the filing of administrative charges. We are also investigating the abduction report with hopes the victim will come forward.

We have also been meeting with alumni and students from all fraternities, warning them that any more of the violence will have grave consequences, including expulsion. We are studying additional measures including, for those who are not

expelled but found guilty of violence, being disqualified from entering UP's graduate programs and professional schools such as law and medicine.

My vice-chancellors and I are disappointed by the lack of cooperation from the two fraternities. Both were conspicuously absent in a meeting I called for all fraternities and they claimed later they did try to attend but arrived late.

The fraternities' silence has been deafening. Upsilon's residents now have a statement condemning the violence and the postings but disclaiming responsibility. We expect both Upsilon and Alpha Phi Beta to take stronger and quick action to root out the scalawags in their ranks and to administer disciplinary action, without prejudice to UP's administrative action. I also call on these organizations to reexamine their concept of fraternity honor, which seems to be oriented toward protecting brods right or wrong and which comes closer to the Mafia omerta or code of silence, rather than with UP's definition of honor.

We must be courageous in these times, even as we remain prudent and vigilant. While I will not suspend classes, faculty can certainly excuse from classes students who are at risk from violence. I ask faculty, students and staff to help monitor the situation and to report any activity, including those on social media, that might be in violation of our laws and the university's code of student conduct.

Together, we will overcome this crisis, even as we take long-term measures to address the culture of violence and impunity and now, fearmongering.

If we are to fear anything, it is UP's loss of its moral compass and a sense of common decency.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be a stylized name, possibly "L. M. ...", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.