

Priest accused of rape sued for libel; alleged rape victim missing

- Ben Serrano -

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BUTUAN CITY ,Philippines –Tubay, Agusan del Norte Mayor Sadeka Garcia Tomaneng filed a libel case against parish priest Raul Cabonce for saying she was behind the filing of a rape complaint by a 17-year-old girl against him.

In a complaint-affidavit filed before Agusan del Norte Prosecutor Marigel Dagani Hugo on July 7, Tomaneng said Cabonce’s allegation was “malicious and motivated by ill will against her integrity.”

“Having principally authored the Gender Development Code of Agusan del Norte when I was provincial board member, I have continuously nurtured my reputation as public official who seriously look after welfare and rights of

women.”

“As such I am always honest and true and that in maliciously implicating me as behind accusations of rape or helping the rape victim just only to pin down Father Cabonce is absolutely without basis and malicious that caused me mental anguish, fright and moral shock” Tomaneng told **The STAR**.

Tomaneng said Cabonce, in an interview over a local radio station and even in one of his homilies claimed she was behind a smear campaign against him.

A 17-year-old girl accused Cabonce of raping her on three occasions, according to a June 24 police blotter.

Tomaneng is asking for P1 million in moral damages, P50,000 exemplary damages, P100,000 attorney’s fees and P100,000 litigation expenses.

The mayor said she does not know the alleged rape victim personally because she is not a resident of Tubay.

The municipal social welfare officer of Tubay meanwhile claimed that the alleged rape victim and her mother were now nowhere to be found .

Tubay Municipal Social Welfare officer Isabelita “Bing” Islabon said she had been trying to locate the alleged victim and her mother for weeks now but she could no longer find them.

Islabon said the girl and her mother were also not in their listed address at the Missionary Sisters of Mary (MSM) convent in Kilometer 4, Barangay Ba-an, Butuan City.

She said even Gabriela Secretary Atel Hijos, who helped the victim file a complaint told her that they could not locate the alleged victim.