

While the Court does not condone the respondent's misconduct, it seeks to strike a fair balance between safeguarding the interests of the public from erring lawyers and avoiding the undue and prolonged deprivation of a person's livelihood, especially when he or she has already endured financial hardship as a result of the pandemic. This, however, should not be construed as a license for impunity. The respondent's willful defiance of the IBP's orders is treated as a separate and distinct offense, unrelated to the mitigating circumstances considered in his favor. His financial difficulties, though acknowledged, neither justify nor explain his failure to comply with the IBP's orders or, at the very least, to provide a credible explanation for his noncompliance.

In light of these considerations, the Court finds it appropriate to impose the penalty of suspension from the practice of law for six months, along with a fine of PHP 50,000.00.

ACCORDINGLY, the Court finds respondent Atty. Ariel M. Reyes **GUILTY** of violating Canons II and III of the Code of Professional Responsibility and Accountability, and is **SUSPENDED** from the practice of law for a period of six months. He is also meted a **FINE** in the amount of PHP 50,000.00 for his repeated disobedience to the orders of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines. Payment of the fine shall be made to this Court within a period of 10 days from the receipt of this Decision, and the respondent is **ORDERED** to submit to the Court the proof of compliance within 10 days from such payment.

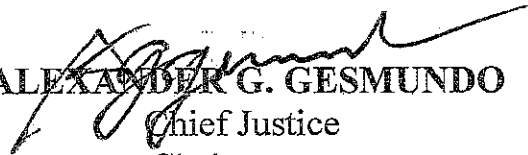
The suspension from the practice of law shall take effect immediately upon receipt of this Decision and the respondent is **DIRECTED** to immediately file a Manifestation to the Court that his suspension has started, stating the exact date of receipt of this Decision, copy furnished all courts and quasi-judicial bodies where he has entered his appearance as counsel.


Let a copy of this Decision be furnished to: (a) the Office of the Court Administrator for dissemination to all courts throughout the country; (b) the Integrated Bar of the Philippines for its information and guidance; and (c) the Office of the Bar Confidant to be appended to the respondent's personal record.

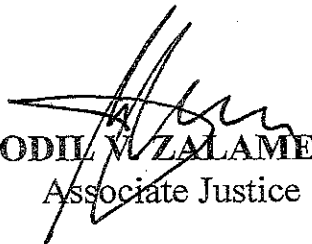
SO ORDERED.



RICARDO K. ROSARIO
Associate Justice

WE CONCUR:


ALEXANDER G. GESMUNDO
Chief Justice
Chairperson


RAMON PAUL L. HERNANDO
Associate Justice


RODIL V. ZALAMEDA
Associate Justice


JOSE MIDAS P. MARQUEZ
Associate Justice

