

JONATHAN VILEÑA, COMPLAINANT, VS. JUDGE BIENVENIDO A. MAPAYE, MUNICIPAL TRIAL COURT, SARIAYA, QUEZON, RESPONDENT.*A.M. No. MTJ-02-1424 (A.M. OCA I.P.I No. 00-892-MTJ). April 24, 2002*

Ponente: DE LEON, JR., J.

Read online (full-text search, related cases, audio case brief): <https://batas.org/library/6479c0474e3d/>**DE LEON, JR., J.:**

In a sworn complaint dated May 4, 2000 complainant Jonathan Vileña charged respondent Judge Bienvenido A. Mapaye, presiding judge of the Municipal Trial Court of Sariaya, Quezon with Knowingly Rendering an Unjust Judgment, Gross Ignorance of the Law and Gross Incompetence relative to Criminal Case No. 95-34 entitled "People vs. Jonathan Vileña, et al."

Complainant Vileña was one of the accused in Criminal Case No. 95-34 for Direct Assault upon an Agent of Person in Authority. On September 9, 1996, respondent Judge Mapaye rendered a decision finding the complainant, one of the accused therein, guilty as charged and sentencing him to suffer an imprisonment of three (3) years, six (6) months and twenty one (21) days to four (4) years, nine (9) months and ten (10) days of prision correccional and to pay a fine of Five Hundred Pesos (P500.00). Complainant contends that in arriving at the penalty imposed, respondent Judge Mapaye did not take into consideration the provisions of the Indeterminate Sentence Law. The complainant narrates that his father tried personally filing a Motion to Correct/Clarify Penalty but respondent Judge Mapaye refused to accept it. The said motion dated August 5, 1998 was thus sent instead by registered mail. Respondent Judge Mapaye denied the motion on August 11, 1998 on the ground that the decision had become final and executory before the motion was filed. But the complainant claims the motion was decided without a hearing.

While the complainant was serving his sentence, a petition for Habeas Corpus was filed with the Court of Appeals docketed as CA G.R. SP No. 52325. In a Resolution dated September 9, 1999, the Court of Appeals found the penalty imposed by respondent Judge Mapaye on the complainant to be excessive as it fell within the penalty prescribed for aggravated Direct Assault. Ruling that the complainant should have been found guilty of Simple Assault Upon an Agent of a Person in Authority only, the Court of Appeals applied the Indeterminate Sentence Law and reduced the sentence to six (6) months of arresto mayor as minimum up to one (1) year, eight (8) months and twenty (20) days of prision correccional as maximum and a fine of Two Hundred Fifty Pesos (P250.00). The complainant was then released from prison on October 12, 1999, having served the maximum sentence. The complainant claims he was aggrieved by the erroneous decision of respondent Judge Mapaye.

In his Comment dated July 28, 2000 respondent Judge Mapaye admits his failure to apply the Indeterminate Sentence Law. Nonetheless, he contends that the complainant should have seasonably raised the issue in a motion for reconsideration and fault should not be ascribed to him for his failure to apply the Indeterminate Sentence Law since complainant was amply protected during the course of the trial, having been duly represented by a counsel. He adds that his decision was affirmed in toto by the Regional Trial Court of Lucena City, Branch 54, in a

Decision dated August 5, 1997.

Respondent Judge Mapaye further denies being present when the father of the complainant allegedly tried to personally file the Motion to Clarify/Correct Penalty. Respondent Judge Mapaye argues that even if there was a genuine effort to file the motion, it would have been rejected by the Clerk of Court for having been filed out of time. With respect to his decision to deny the motion on August 11, 1998 without the benefit of a hearing, respondent Judge Mapaye maintains that there was nothing irregular about it as he no longer had any jurisdiction to rule on the matter, the case having been elevated to the Regional Trial Court. Lastly, respondent Judge Mapaye points out that he has never been the subject of an administrative complaint in more than a decade of service in the judiciary.

After evaluating the merits of this administrative case, the Office of the Court Administrator recommends that the respondent Judge Mapaye be fined in the amount of Five Thousand Pesos (P5,000.00) for Gross Ignorance of the Law.

Once again we are called upon to reiterate the rule that although a judge may not always be subjected to disciplinary action for every erroneous order or decision he renders, that relative immunity is not a license to be negligent or abusive and arbitrary in performing his adjudicatory prerogatives. It is true that a judge may err in fixing the minimum and maximum terms of an indeterminate sentence. However, his apparent unawareness of or unfamiliarity with the application of the Indeterminate Sentence Law and the duration and graduation of penalties merit disciplinary action from reprimand to removal.[1]

Respondent Judge Mayape's imposition of penalty without applying the provisions of the Indeterminate Sentence Law betrays his inadequate knowledge of basic legal principles despite his "more than a decade" of service in the judiciary. Every judge should know that in applying the Indeterminate Sentence Law for offenses penalized under the Revised Penal Code, the indeterminate sentence should have a fixed minimum and maximum. And when the law is so elementary, not to know it or to act as if one does not know it constitutes gross ignorance of the law.[2]

Competence is a mark of a good judge. When a judge displays an utter lack of familiarity with the basic rules of law, such as the application of the Indeterminate Sentence Law, he erodes the public's confidence in the competence of our courts. Having accepted the exalted position of a judge, respondent Judge Mapaye owes the public and the court the duty to be proficient in the law. As a judge, respondent Judge Mapaye is "expected to keep abreast of laws and prevailing jurisprudence." Basic rules must be at the palm of his hand. A judge must be acquainted with legal norms and precepts.

As mentioned earlier, the Office of the Court Administrator recommends that the respondent judge be fined in the amount of Five Thousand Pesos (P5,000.00). Under Section 8 of A.M. No. 01-8-10-SC amending Rule 140 of the Rules of Court on the Discipline of Justice and Judges, which took effect on October 1, 2001, gross ignorance of the law is classified as a serious charge which carries with it a penalty of either dismissal from service, suspension or a fine of more than Twenty Thousand Pesos (P20,000.00) but not exceeding Forty Thousand Pesos (P40,000.00). Considering, however, that the incident took place before A.M. No. 01-8-10-SC took effect, we are constrained to agree with the recommendation of the OCA.

WHEREFORE, respondent Judge Bienvenido A. Magpaye, presiding judge of the Municipal Trial Court of Sariaya, Quezon is found guilty of Gross Ignorance of the Law and is hereby FINED in the amount of Five Thousand Pesos (P5,000.00), with a warning that a repetition of the same or similar offense will be dealt with more severely.

SO ORDERED.

Bellosillo, (Chairman), Mendoza, Quisumbing, and Corona, JJ., concur.

[1] Dadizon v. Lirios, 337 SCRA 36, 39 [2000] citing Sanchez v. Vestil, 298 SCRA 1 [1998] and In Re: Jose G. Paulin, 101 SCRA 605 [1980]; Bacar, v. De Guzman, Jr., 271 SCRA 328 [1997].

[2] Dadizon v. Lirios, supra. citing Estoya v. Abraham-Singson, 237 SCRA 1 [1994] and Bacar v. De Guzman, supra.

ABOUT BATAS.ORG

Study smarter at BATAS.org

The Philippine bar review and law-school companion built around how your brain actually remembers.

The complete Philippine law library - free for everyone.

More than 100,000 Supreme Court decisions, Republic Acts, and executive issuances - full-text searchable, browsable by category and year, and always free. No paywall, no login. This PDF came from it.

Audio case-brief lectures.

Any decision becomes a podcast-style lecture - facts, issues, ruling, and doctrine - with read-along highlighting and a hands-free presentation mode. Study while commuting, working out, or resting your eyes.

Bar review built on the science of memory.

Complete, sequenced courses for all eight bar subjects, narrated like podcasts and reinforced with retrieval practice and spaced review - the study techniques with the strongest evidence behind them.

The full law-school curriculum.

One subscription unlocks the entire J.D. curriculum - every subject, every lesson, with your progress tracked down to the paragraph so you can pick up exactly where you left off, on any device.

Mock exams that tell you where you stand.

Timed multiple-choice exams graded instantly, with per-subject score breakdowns and focus suggestions that point you at your weakest topics first.

A study planner that keeps you on pace.

Set your schedule and BATAS tells you every day whether you are on track for bar day - and exactly which lesson to take next.

Start free at <https://batas.org>

The law library is free forever - and your first lesson is one click away.

The text of this document is an official public record and remains in the public domain. Formatting, presentation, and compilation © 2026 batas.org.

Downloaded free from the batas.org Law Library. Share it freely - the library is free for every law student, bar reviewee, and practitioner.