

Title: Torres v. Director of Bureau of Corrections

Facts:

1. Wilfredo Sumulong Torres was convicted by the Court of First Instance of Manila for two counts of estafa. His convictions were affirmed by the Court of Appeals.
2. The maximum sentence would expire on November 2, 2000. However, Torres was granted a conditional pardon by the President of the Philippines on April 18, 1979, with the condition that he would “not again violate any of the penal laws of the Philippines.” Torres accepted the conditional pardon and was released from confinement.
3. On May 21, 1986, the Board of Pardons and Parole recommended to the President the revocation of Torres’s conditional pardon. This recommendation was based on the charges filed against Torres for twenty counts of estafa and a conviction of sedition by the Regional Trial Court of Quezon City.
4. On September 8, 1986, responding to the recommendation, the President cancelled the conditional pardon.
5. Consequently, Minister of Justice Neptali A. Gonzales issued an Order of Arrest and Recommitment against Torres on October 10, 1986. Torres was arrested and reincarcerated at the New Bilibid Prisons to serve the unexpired portion of his sentence.
6. Torres challenged the Order of Arrest and Recommitment through a habeas corpus petition in a prior case (Torres v. Gonzales), but the petition was denied, with the Court ruling that such actions by the President were executive prerogatives not subject to judicial scrutiny.
7. Torres, through his wife and children, filed a separate habeas corpus petition arguing that the President’s decision constituted a violation of Torres’s right to due process and the presumption of innocence.

Procedural Posture:

- Torres was reincarcerated and sought a legal remedy through an initial habeas corpus petition, which was denied. He then initiated this succeeding habeas corpus proceeding claiming due process violations.

Issues:

1. Whether the President's decision to revoke a conditional pardon without waiting for a judicial determination of a breach violates the pardonee's constitutional rights.
2. Whether the President can unilaterally determine there was a breach of conditions or if such a determination is subject to judicial review.

Court's Decision:

1. On the first issue, the Court held that the determination of a breach of conditional pardon remains an executive act and directly linked to the exercise of executive clemency, and thus not subject to judicial scrutiny. It ruled that a judicial determination of guilt is not necessary for the President to exercise this prerogative.
2. Regarding the second issue, the Court reiterated its stance from previous rulings that such presidential discretionary acts related to conditional pardon are beyond judicial interference, emphasizing the contractual nature of the pardon between the Chief Executive and the offender.

Doctrine:

The decision affirmed long-held doctrines:

- The grant, terms, breach assessment, and sanctions of a conditional pardon are purely executive functions and not subject to judicial review, as per prior landmark rulings like *Tesoro v. Director of Prisons*.
- Once a pardonee accepts the conditions of a pardon, any breach falls under the purview of executive monitoring and decision-making without needing a court's interference.

Class Notes:

1. **Conditional Pardon**: A pardon granted with terms subject to compliance by the pardonee. Non-compliance permits a recommitment.
2. **Presidential Prerogative**: Acts of executive discretion established under Section 64(i) of the Revised Administrative Code are not subject to judicial review.
3. **Judicial vs. Executive Powers**: The separation of powers doctrine upholds the President's decision in conditional pardon cases as non-justiciable.
4. **Executive Clemency**: The President of the Philippines can pardon convicts, establish terms, and revoke such pardons without requiring court intervention upon perceived

breaches.

Historical Background:

The case highlights an aspect of the separation of powers and the nature of executive clemency as seen within the Philippine legal system. Historically, the exercise of presidential clemency has served as a demonstration of executive oversight in correctional systems, grounded in constitutional powers. Cases like Torres's underscore the balance and distinctions between executive powers and judicial authority, reflecting historical consistency in the interpretation of the Revised Administrative Code and the discretionary powers of the Presidency established in previous Supreme Court rulings.