

# Philippine governor wants no charges if attacker is ill

SAN FERNANDO, Philippines – A priest who serves as provincial governor of Pampanga said he wants police to drop charges against a man who allegedly drew a knife on him if the man is mentally ill.

Father Eddie Panlilio told the Asian church news agency UCA News Oct. 2 that he had asked police to bring Rafael Enriquez to the Department of Social Welfare and Development for psychiatric evaluation.

The priest said he also directed the provincial legal office to study the apparent attack on his life the previous day.

Father Panlilio, the first Catholic priest elected to public office in the Philippines, took the oath of office as governor June 30 and is not practicing his priestly ministries during his three-year term.

Enriquez, 30, approached Father Panlilio from behind as reporters were interviewing the governor in the lobby of the capitol. The governor had just launched his “White Ribbon Campaign” for good governance. Police reports said Enriquez pulled a six-inch knife out of his bag and raised it behind the priest’s back. However, a security aide grabbed the man’s hand, and the attacker was taken to the police station for investigation.

Keith Singian of the provincial police office told UCA News Enriquez was charged with violating the law against concealment of a deadly weapon and the ban on carrying firearms and deadly weapons during the election season. The period from Sept. 29 until Nov. 13 has been designated an election season, bracketing the Oct. 29 election for village and youth council officials.

Enriquez reportedly denied trying to stab Father Panlilio. He said he was just getting a cigarette from his bag but his knife was in the way, so he had to hold it as he approached the governor.

However, Singian said Enriquez gave various reasons for being in the capitol building. He told one investigator he was asking for financial help, but would not specify for what. To another, he said he was following up on documents for a land title.

Enriquez's mother told police her son suffers from schizophrenia. Accompanied by the police superintendent, she went to the capitol to explain her son's condition to the governor.

Father Panlilio told UCA News he did not pay "much attention" to the incident until he "realized the possible implications of what could have happened." He said he has received threats to his life since he started campaigning for governor.