

**COVID-19 RELATED ISSUANCES  
 COURT ISSUANCES**

Issuance	Salient Points	Extension of Deadlines, if any		
		Action	Original Due Date	Extended Due Date
<b>Supreme Court</b>				
<b>OCA Circular No. 93-2020 dated May 4, 2020</b>	<p>Hearings of urgent matters in criminal cases involving Persons Deprived with Liberty (PDL) is being pilot tested. In accordance thereof, the following guidelines shall be implemented:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Videoconferencing hearings shall only use the officially provided Philippines Judiciary 365 platform.</li> <li>2. Videoconferencing hearings shall include all stages of trial of newly-filed and pending criminal cases.</li> <li>3. Videoconferencing hearings shall be scheduled by the court. The parties shall be notified through their respective email addresses. All submissions from the parties must be received by the court at least 3 days prior the scheduled videoconferencing hearing and all parties must be furnished copies.</li> <li>4. The proceedings during the videoconferencing hearing shall be recorded by the judge.</li> <li>5. If during the videoconferencing hearings, the judge issues or promulgates an order or decision, a copy thereof shall immediately be furnished the parties. The service of such order or decision may be done electronically, but proof of receipt should be properly recorded.</li> </ol>			

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	6. Judges shall submit weekly report in the videoconferencing hearings that they have conducted.			
<b>Admin. Circular No. 37-2020, dated April 27, 2020</b>	<p>Hearings on urgent matters in criminal cases involving PDLs through videoconferencing shall be pilot tested in the following authorized court stations identified by the Office of the Court Administrator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All court stations in the National Capital Judicial Region</li> <li>• Luzon <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Region I – La Trinidad, Benguet; Baguio City; Dagupan City, Pangasinan;</li> <li>○ Region II – Ilagan, Isabela; Santiago City; Cabagan, Isabela; Roxas, Isabela; and Lubuagan, Kalinga;</li> <li>○ Region III – Olongapo City; Balanga City; Mariveles, Bataan; Gapa City; Sto. Domingo, Nueva Ecija; San Fernando, Pampanga; Guagua, Pampanga; Angeles City; Capas, Tarlac;</li> <li>○ Region IV – Tanauan, Batangas; Balayan, Batangas; Nasugbu, Batangas; Rosario, Batangas; Tagaytay City; Trece Martires, Cavite; Imus, Cavite; Naic, Cavite; San Pablo City; Calamba, Laguna; Lucena City, Gumaca, Quezon; Binangonan, Rizal; San Mateo, Rizal; Morong, Rizal; Antipolo City; Boac, Marinduque; Calapan City; Puerto Princesa, Palawan;</li> <li>○ Region V – Legazpi City; Naga City; Sorsogon City;</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Visayas</li> </ul>			

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Region VI – Iloilo City; Bacolod City; San Jose, Antique; San Carlos City, Negros Occidental;</li> <li>○ Region VII – Cebu City; Lapu Lapu City; Mandaue City; Dumaguete City; Tanjay City;</li> <li>○ Region VIII – Tacloban City; Ormoc City;</li> <li>● Mindanao               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Region IX – Dipolog City; Ipil, Zamboanga Sibugay; Zamboanga City; Pagadian City; Isabela City, Basilan; Jolo, Sulu;</li> <li>○ Region X – Cagayan de Oro City; Surigao City; Malaybalay City, Bukidnon;</li> <li>○ Region XI – Tandag City; Digos City; Gen. Santos City; Koronadal City; Polomok City; Alabel, Sarangani;;</li> <li>○ Region XII – Shariff Aguak, Maguindanao; Marawi City; Iligan City; Kidapawan City and Midsayap, North Cotabato</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Hearings through videoconferencing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● shall cover all PDLs;</li> <li>● may apply to all stages of trial of newly-filed and pending criminal cases, including but not limited to arraignment, pre-trial, bail hearings, trial proper, and promulgation of judgment; and</li> <li>● are only for pilot testing, and shall apply only during this public health emergency period.</li> </ul> <p>Courts shall ensure that all the constitutional rights of the accused are protected and observed.</p>			

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	<p>Considering that the remote locations of the participants are extensions of the court, the in-person appearances, testimonies, and experiences of the litigants and parties in courts shall always be closely resembled in the remote appearances and testimonies of the litigants and parties in the videoconference proceedings. In the same manner, the dignity and solemnity of in-court proceedings shall at all times be mirrored in videoconference proceedings.</p> <p>The Teams application shall be used for videoconference proceedings, and neither shall the courts use a different email address aside from the authorized account officially provided.</p>			
<b>Admin. Circular No. 36-2020, dated April 27, 2020</b>	<p>“GCQ areas” include the following from May 1 to 15, 2020:</p> <p>1. Luzon</p> <p>(a) CAR, except Benguet</p> <p>(b) Region I, except Pangasinan</p> <p>(c) Region II</p> <p>(d) Region III – Aurora</p> <p>(e) Region IV-B, except Oriental Mindoro &amp; Occidental Mindoro</p> <p>(f) Region V, except Albay &amp; Catanduanes</p> <p>2. Visayas</p> <p>(a) Region VI, except Aklan, Antique, Capiz &amp; Iloilo</p> <p>(b) Region VII, except Cebu &amp; Cebu City</p> <p>(c) Region VIII</p> <p>3. Mindanao</p> <p>(a) Region IX</p> <p>(b) Region X</p>	<p>Filing of petitions and appeals, complaints, motions, pleadings and other court submissions*</p> <p>* Pleadings and other court submissions may still be filed by parties within the reglementary period on or before 15 May 2020 through electronic means, if available.</p>	15 March 2020 – 15 May 2020	30 calendar days from 16 May 2020

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	<p>(c) Region XI, except Davao del Norte, Davao City &amp; Davao de Oro (d) Region XII (e) ARMM</p> <p>All courts in the GCQ areas shall operate as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All branches of courts shall be open beginning May 4, 2020, but shall function only with a skeleton-staff to assist the judge, and shall act only on urgent matters.</li> <li>• Judges and court personnel who are more than 59 years of age, and those with medical conditions making them vulnerable to be easily infected by Covid-19, may report to courts to act on urgent matters. Otherwise, they shall work from their respective residences, but no court records may be taken out of the court. Younger lawyers are recommended to attend hearings on urgent matters.</li> <li>• Operating hours from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm</li> <li>• Night and Saturday courts remain suspended until May 15, 2020.</li> <li>• Hearings are still suspended, except on urgent matters as mentioned in A.C. No. 31-2020. Judges in the GCQ areas, in the exercise of their sound discretion, may set for hearing other urgent matters or concerns to expedite the proceedings or the disposition of the cases pending before their courts.</li> <li>• Online filing of criminal complaints and information, posting of bail, and submission of other urgent pleadings shall continue to be in effect.</li> </ul>	Court actions with prescribed periods, except urgent matters		30 calendar days counted from 16 May 2020

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raffle of newly-filed cases shall be conducted beginning May 4, 2020 in accordance with the regular schedule of raffle, and shall be attended only by members of the Raffle Committee. Private lawyers and general public shall be excluded during this period of public health emergency.</li> <li>• Decisions and orders drafted before and during the GCQ may be promulgated and released, provided no hearings are necessary, except on urgent matters. Service of writs and other court processes on urgent matters within GCQ areas shall proceed.</li> <li>• No actual meetings, seminars, trainings and other functions in the Judiciary shall take place, except those that may be called or authorized by the Chief Justice or by the Judiciary Task Force on COVID-19.</li> <li>• Flag raising and retreat ceremonies remain suspended.</li> <li>• Only those with official business shall be allowed to enter the halls of justice and courtrooms.</li> <li>• All those going to court shall observe the following medical health standards or hygiene practices while in the premises of the halls of justice:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Obligatory temperature check;</li> <li>○ Compulsory wearing of face masks;</li> <li>○ Regular use of alcohol for sanitation;</li> <li>○ Application of disinfectants inside the court rooms and hall of justice common areas;</li> <li>○ Maintenance of social or physical distancing;</li> <li>○ Proper washing of hands; and</li> <li>○ Exercise cough etiquette.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>			

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Executive judges of multi-sala stations and Judges of single-sala courts shall coordinate with their respective local government units and/or health authorities on the proper protocols to be observed and the designation of medical or health care areas for the isolation of suspected infected individuals, and the continuous testing of those who may need it.</li> <li></li> </ul>			
<b>Admin. Circular No. 35-2020, dated April 27, 2020</b>	<p>“ECQ areas” include the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Luzon               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) NCR</li> <li>(b) CAR – Benguet</li> <li>(c) Region I – Pangasinan</li> <li>(d) Region III – Bataan, Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Tarlac, and Zambales</li> <li>(e) Region IV-A – CALABARZON</li> <li>(f) Region IV-B – Oriental Mindoro and Occidental Mindoro</li> <li>(g) Region V – Albay &amp; Catanduanes</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Visayas               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Region VI – Aklan, Antique, Capiz, and Iloilo</li> <li>(b) Region VII – Cebu and Cebu City</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Mindanao               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Region XI – Davao del Norte, Davao City, and Davao de Oro</li> </ol> </li> </ol> <p>During the ECQ extended until May 15, 2020,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>all courts in the ECQ areas               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>shall remain physically closed to all court users, and may be reached only through</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Filing of petitions and appeals, complaints, motions, pleadings and other court submissions*</p> <p>* Pleadings and other court submissions may still be filed by parties within the reglementary period on or before 15 May 2020 through electronic means, if available.</p> <p>Court actions with prescribed periods, except urgent matters</p>	<p>15 March 2020 – 15 May 2020</p>	<p>30 calendar days from 16 May 2020</p> <p>30 calendar days counted from 16 May 2020</p>

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	<p>their respective hotline numbers, email addresses, and/or Facebook accounts, and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ shall continue to operate from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm, Monday to Friday. All electronic communications, however, must be transmitted by court users from 8:30 am to 2:00 pm;</li> <li>• online filing of criminal complaints and information, posting of bail, and submission of other urgent pleadings shall continue to be in effect;</li> <li>• the scheduling of justice- and judges-on-duty, together with the skeleton staff, shall continue so that urgent matters may be addressed;</li> <li>• night and Saturday courts shall remain suspended;</li> <li>• all hearings shall remain suspended, except on urgent matters mentioned in A.C. No. 31-2020;</li> <li>• all justices and judges shall continue to draft decisions and orders in their respective residences, which decisions shall be promulgated or issued once the courts are fully operational, except decisions and orders on urgent matters to be promulgated during ECQ period;</li> <li>• all official meetings, seminars, and trainings and other functions in the Judiciary within the ECQ areas are deferred, except those that may be called or authorized by the Chief Justice or by the Judiciary Task Force on COVID-19; and</li> <li>• flag raising and retreat ceremonies are still suspended.</li> </ul> <p>Should the status of an area or province be changed from ECQ to General Community Quarantine, that</p>			



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	area or province shall be governed by and comply with the circular issued for areas under GCQ.			
<b>OCA Circular No. 90-20, dated April 20, 2020</b>	<p>All judges of the first and second level courts are directed to immediately conduct an inventory of their pending criminal cases which may fall under those (1) may be released after service of minimum imposable penalty or (2) provisional dismissal.</p> <p>They shall immediately act motu proprio on cases on Persons Deprives of Liberty (PDLs) who have been detained for a period at least equal to the minimum penalty of the offense charges and of release such detained on their own recognizance; provided that the court is assured of where the accused may be located while their cases are on-going trial.</p> <p>Motions for recognizance and provisional dismissal of cases resulting to the release of PDLs from detention may be considered urgent and must be immediately set for hearing.</p>			
<b>Admin. Circular No. 34-2020, dated April 8, 2020</b>	<p>All courts nationwide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• shall remain physically closed until April 30, 2020;</li> <li>• may be reached through their respective hotlines, email addresses and/or Facebook accounts; and</li> <li>• shall continue to operate (despite physical closure) from 9:00am to 3:00pm, Monday to Friday, until April 30, 2020. However, all electronic communications must be transmitted by court users from 8:30am to 2:00pm.</li> </ul>	<p>Filing of petitions and appeals, complaints, motions, pleadings and other court submissions*</p> <p>*Pleadings and other court submissions may still be filed by parties within the reglementary period on or before 30 April 2020 through</p>	15 March 2020 – 30 April 2020	30 calendar days counted from 1 May 2020

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	<p>The following shall continue to be in effect until April 30, 2020:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• online filing of criminal complaints and informations, posting of bail, and submission of other urgent pleadings;</li> <li>• scheduling of justices- and judges-on-duty, together with the skeleton-staff, so that urgent matters may be addressed;</li> <li>• suspension of night courts and Saturday courts; and</li> </ul> <p>suspension of all court actions on non-urgent matters.</p>	<p>electronic means, if available.</p> <p>Court actions with prescribed periods</p>		30 calendar days counted from 1 May 2020
<b>OCA Circular No. 90-20, dated April 5, 2020</b>	<p>In stations, cities, and provinces where there are Commercial and Family Court Judges, all urgent matters concerning commercial and family cases shall be referred to the Commercial and Family Court Judges-on-Duty, respectively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pleadings filed shall first be sent electronically to the Judges-on-Duty who may determine their urgency in their respective residences and thereafter act accordingly (citing A.C. No. 33-2020).</li> </ul>			
<b>Admin. Circular No. 33-2020, dated March 31, 2020</b>	<p>Criminal Complaints and Informations, with other supporting documents, may be filed through email before the proper first or second level court.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Within 3 days from e-filing of the complaint or information, the Judge on duty shall personally evaluate the resolution of the prosecutor and its supporting evidence.</li> <li>• In case of doubt on the existence of probable cause, the Judge on duty may order the prosecutor to submit, through electronic transmission, additional evidence within 3 days from notice.</li> </ul>			

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The issue must be resolved by the court within 10 days from the filing of the complaint or information.</li> </ul> <p>In case the Judge on duty determines the accused to be admitted to bail as a matter of right pursuant to Sec. 4, Rule 114 of the Revised Rules of Criminal Procedure,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the accused may initially submit all requirements for bail through electronic transmission.</li> <li>Upon examination of the submissions and a finding of completeness and compliance, the Judge on duty shall sign the approval of the bail and the consequent release order, which shall then be electronically transmitted to the Executive Judge who in turn shall electronically transmit the same within the same day to the proper law enforcement authority/detention facility to enable the release of the accused.</li> <li>The Judge on duty may reduce the amount of bail initially fixed, upon motion of the accused and after giving the prosecutor the opportunity to comment within a non-extendible 24-hour period from the filing of the motion, which motion and order to file comment thereon may be sent electronically.</li> </ul> <p>The initial online submission of the requirements for bail may also be availed of by an accused who has been charged before the court prior to the start of this public health emergency period.</p> <p>The Office of the Court of Administrator shall issue Guidelines, including templates as well as the list of documents which can be practically produced within</p>			

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	<p>this period of emergency, within 3 days to ensure proper implementation.</p>			
<p><b>Admin. Circular No. 32-2020, dated March 20, 2020</b></p>	<p>All courts nationwide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• shall be physically closed; and</li> <li>• may be reached only through their respective hotlines, email addresses, and Facebook accounts, if available, effective 23 March 2020.</li> </ul> <p>Only when the matter being raised is urgent will the justice or judge on-duty, together with the skeleton-staff, go to court to receive and act on said urgent matter. Otherwise, they must stay at their respective residences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All calls and messages shall be entertained from 8:30 am to 2:00 pm, Monday to Friday.</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Admin. Circular No. 31-2020 dated March 16, 2020</b></p>	<p>All courts nationwide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• shall reduce operations beginning 16 March 2020 until 15 April 2020;</li> <li>• during said period shall maintain the necessary skeletal staff to act on urgent matters;</li> <li>• shall operate from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm during the period;</li> </ul> <p>The following are suspended from 16 March 2020 until 15 April 2020:</p>	<p>Filing petitions and appeals, complaints, motions, pleadings, and other court submissions (Those who prefer to file said pleadings within the reglementary period without the need of the extension granted may do so by facsimile or by</p>	<p>15 March 2020 – 15 April 2020</p>	<p>30 calendar days from 16 April 2020 or 16 May 2020</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>operations of night courts;</li> <li>work in all courts, court offices, divisions, sections, and units, including those in the SC, except in courts and court offices concerned in the resolution of urgent matters and cases;</li> <li>hearings nationwide, except on urgent matters, such as but not limited to petitions, motions and pleadings in relation to bail and <i>habeas corpus</i>, promulgation of judgments of acquittals, reliefs for those who may be arrested and detained during this period, and other related actions that may be filed in relation to measures imposed at the local or national levels to address the declared health emergency; and</li> <li>scheduled court actions which are not considered urgent during said period (and shall be rescheduled).</li> </ul>	transmitting them through electric means, if available.)		
		Court actions with prescribed periods		Extended for 30 calendar days counted from 16 April 2020
<b>Court of Tax Appeals</b>				
<b>Administrative Order No. 04-2020, dated March 17, 2020</b>	CTA Justices shall adopt a skeleton-force for the period of 18 March 2020 until 15 April 2020 during modified operating hours from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm, as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All Justices are on stand-by to act on urgent matters;</li> <li>All Executive Clerks of Court, CTA Chiefs of Office, CTA Assistant Chiefs of Office, and</li> </ul>			

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	<p>other officials are on-call basis to assist Justices on urgent matters;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The following divisions shall have 1 personnel in their workstations:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Receiving Section of Judicial Records Division;</li> <li>Records Officer for verification and docketing;</li> <li>Cash Division;</li> <li>General Services Division; and</li> <li>Medical Unit.</li> </ol> </li> </ul> <p>Should there be litigants with urgent matters, the following guidelines shall be observed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only those with urgent official business with the Court may be allowed entry to the CTA premises; and</li> </ul> <p>All those entering the Court premises must fill up a declaration form and subjected to a no-contact thermal scanning, and those found to be suffering from fever, flu, and colds, and cough shall be prevented from entering.</p>			