

Guatemalan court rules in favor of tweet author

July 10 2009, By LUIS ANGEL FAF , Associated Press Writer

(AP) -- An appeals court found insufficient evidence to warrant the trial of a Guatemalan whose Twitter message led to his arrest on charges of inciting financial panic.

Jean Anleu was arrested and charged in May after sending a 96-character tweet that urged depositors to withdraw funds from a bank involved in a political-murder scandal. The message earned him the unfortunate distinction of becoming one of the first people in the world to be arrested for a tweet.

The new ruling means charges will be dropped Friday if prosecutors don't appeal first. Prosecutor Genaro Pacheco told The Associated Press that he has not been officially informed of the appeals court's decision and has not considered dropping the case.

Anleu found the court's ruling to be "very Twitter-like."

"It's a long legal document but there is a very short sentence that sums it up, like a tweet: The appeals court orders the judge to rule the case lacks merit," Anleu told the Associated press by instant message. "A huge weight has been lifted off my shoulders. We still have to see what the prosecution does."

Incensed by reports of a political scandal at Guatemala's rural development bank, Anleu sent the offending tweet under the Internet alias "jeanfer," urging depositors to pull their money from the bank.

Written in Spanish, it said: "First concrete action should be take cash out of Banrural and bankrupt the bank of the corrupt."

Pacheco contends the tweet illegally undermined public trust in Guatemala's banking system, and authorities proved Anleu sent the message by searching his [Guatemala](#) City home. He was jailed for a day and a half and released on bail.

Anleu now hopes to recover \$6,200 in bail. He spent another \$7,000 on legal fees. About half the bail money was donated by sympathetic twitterers sending money via [PayPal](#).

Defense attorney Jose Toledo accuses the government of wanting to make an example out of Anleu in the wake of a frenzy of Internet activity by Guatemalans calling for rallies against the administration of President Alvaro Colom.

Colom has been accused of helping drug cartels launder money through Banrural in a posthumous video message by in lawyer Rodrigo Rosenberg, who accused Colom of ordering his death.

Rosenberg was shot dead by unknown assailants days after making the video. DVDs of the tape were distributed at his funeral, and Colom opponents quickly put the video up on YouTube.

Colom says the accusations are part of an elaborate plot to destabilize the country. But many Guatemalans - including Anleu - responded to the scandal with outrage on social networks, encouraging huge protest marches.

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