

Malaysia defamation case: 100 apologies on Twitter

June 2 2011, By SEAN YOONG , Associated Press

(AP) -- A Malaysian social activist will apologize 100 times on Twitter in an unusual settlement with a magazine publisher in a defamation case, his lawyer said Thursday.

The penalty has sparked debate among Internet users about the pitfalls of social media in Malaysia, where authorities have repeatedly warned people to be more cautious about they write on blogs, Facebook and Twitter.

Fahmi Fadzil, an opposition politician's aide and respected commentator on social issues, claimed on Twitter in January that his pregnant friend had been poorly treated by her employers at a magazine run by BluInc Media.

Fahmi wrote an apology to BluInc on Twitter a few hours after making that allegation, but the company's lawyers later sent him a letter demanding unspecified financial damages for defamation and another apology in major newspapers, said Fahmi's lawyer, Syahredzan Johan.

Syahredzan said Fahmi settled the case this week by agreeing to apologize 100 times over three days on Twitter, where he has more than 4,200 followers. Syahredzan declined to say who suggested the terms.

"I've DEFAMED Blu Inc Media and Female Magazine. My tweets on their (human resource) policies are untrue. I retract those words and hereby apologize," Fahmi wrote in a series of [tweets](#) starting Thursday

that came out about once every 30 minutes.

BluInc's legal firm said the lawyer handling the case could not immediately be contacted. Officials at the publishing company familiar with the matter were also not available for comment. BluInc publishes more than 20 lifestyle and health magazines in Malaysia.

Fahmi told his followers he could not elaborate on the case, but many prominent Twitter users in Malaysia voiced sympathy for him.

"First time witnessing a 'community service sentence' on Twitter," [blogger](#) Christopher Tock wrote. "Will this be something common in future years?"

Syahredzan, Fahmi's lawyer, said it was believed to be the first settlement involving the use of [Twitter](#) in a Malaysian defamation case.

"We're in uncharted waters," Syahredzan said, adding that the case could cause Malaysians to become more aware of the repercussions of their comments on social media.

Over the past year, Malaysian authorities have arrested or filed charges against several people who made statements on [Facebook](#) that allegedly insulted the country's royalty or stirred religious tensions. A government minister has also filed a defamation suit against a blogger who accused him of raping an Indonesian housemaid.

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