

Libelous rice trader guilty

Daily Tribune (Philippines) · 14 Oct 2019 · A7 · Alvin Murcia

A Quezon City court found guilty a known rice trader from Bulacan of online libel after a Department of Agriculture (DA) official accused him of false and malicious postings on his Facebook account last year.

In her 15-page decision, Regional Trial Court (RTC) branch 90 Judge Ma. Luisa Gonzales-Betic found Jomerito “Jojo” Soliman guilty beyond reasonable doubt of cyber libel under section 4 of Republic Act 10175 and was ordered to pay a fine of P50,000 or face imprisonment.

The case stemmed from a series of posts by Soliman starting on 23 January 2018 against DA Assistant Secretary Waldo Carpio for favoring certain import permit applicants while delaying the approval or release of others.

Judge Gonzales-Betic, in her ruling, said “The accused intended to convey in his Facebook account false and malicious imputations against said complainant to the effect that the latter takes favors and unduly delays the release of the accused’s Sanitary and Phytosanitary import Clearance (SPS permit). As the said accused well knew these were entirely false and malicious in fact and therefore highly libelous offense and derogatory and were made for no other purpose than to impeach and besmirch the good name, integrity, credibility and reputation of the said complainant.”

She concluded “In fact the latter (Carpio) was exposed to dishonor, discredit, public hatred, contempt and ridicule to the damage and prejudice of the said offended party.”