

22 February 2018

Malaysia: Fahmi Reza sentenced to prison and fined

On 20 February 2018, **Fahmi Reza** was sentenced to one month's imprisonment and fined RM30,000 by the Sessions Court in Ipoh for posting an edited image of the prime minister on social media.

[Fahmi Reza](#) is a human rights defender, satirical artist and filmmaker who uses cartoons and graphic design in order to raise awareness of human rights violations and corruption in Malaysia. He won the “Most Outstanding Human Rights Film” award at the 2007 Freedom Film Fest. Most recently, his [depiction](#) of the Malaysian prime minister Najib Razak as a clown in protest of the decision of the attorney general to clear the prime minister of any corruption went viral in Southeast Asia. Fahmi Reza also posted the image on Twitter to protest the frequent usage of the Sedition Act in Malaysia.

On 10 June 2016, Fahmi Reza was charged under Section 233(1)(a) of the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 (Act 588), punishable under Section 233(3) for posting the image of the Malaysian Prime Minister as a clown along with the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) logo on his Facebook account on 8 February 2016. On 20 February 2018, he was found guilty of using network services to transmit content that “is obscene, indecent, false, menacing or offensive in character with intent to annoy, abuse, threaten or harass another person”. He has been released on bail.

Authorities in Malaysia intensified their crackdown on anti-corruption human rights defenders and protesters in the wake of embezzlement allegations involving top politicians. To this effect, restrictive laws such as the Communications and Multimedia Act continue to be used to silence government critics, who are harassed, intimidated and often detained for their work in protecting and promoting human rights in Malaysia. Human rights defenders focusing on human rights violations caused by corruption have been particularly affected. Section 233(1)(a) of the CMA is broad in scope, vague and ambiguous and is being used to stifle speech and expression and quash protest.

Front Line Defenders condemns the conviction of human rights defender Fahmi Reza, as it strongly believes that it is a restriction on his freedom of expression as a result of his peaceful and legitimate work as a human rights defender in Malaysia.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Malaysia to:

1. Immediately quash Fahmi Reza's conviction;
2. Guarantee that human rights defenders in Malaysia are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.