

## Why Filipino Nurse had to be Sacked

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*The Straits Times*, 11 January 2015

The online comments made by a Filipino nurse are not compatible with the standards of behaviour expected of hospital employees, said the Health Ministry in a statement yesterday, a day after Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) sacked him.

"The ministry expects all health-care professionals, whether local or foreign, in our public institutions to uphold the values of respect for those they serve, professionalism, integrity and social responsibility," said its spokesman.

Mr Ello Ed Mundsel Bello was dismissed last Friday for posting three offensive comments concerning Singapore and religion on his Facebook and Google Plus pages last year.

His disparaging remarks came to the attention of TTSH after more offending posts made on Facebook this year went viral a few days ago. In these posts, he allegedly called Singaporeans "loosers" (losers), and said he was "praying that disasters (disasters) will strike Singapore".

However, Mr Bello claimed that his account had been hacked and that he had made a police report.

When contacted, police said investigations are ongoing, and they will provide an update later.

The Philippine Embassy in Singapore told The Sunday Times it is advising Mr Bello on the probe.

Mr Bello's online comments had riled some netizens, who complained to the hospital. A Facebook group, "Petition to deport Edz Ello the Filipino", has amassed more than 700 members.

Similar offensive comments on social media had previously led to some people losing their jobs.

Briton Anton Casey was fired from his wealth manager job last year for lamenting the "stench" of public transport; in 2012, Ms Amy Cheong lost her job at NTUC after drawing flak for complaining about Malay traditional weddings.

Commentators and public relations practitioners say it is not surprising that Mr Bello was sacked.

**National University of Singapore sociologist Tan Ern Ser said: "To begin with, there are already some negative vibes towards Filipinos in general. The nurse's bad-mouthing Singaporeans has therefore struck a raw nerve."**

Last year, a Philippine Independence Day celebration for Filipinos in Singapore was cancelled due to concerns about public safety and security, following online abuse directed at the choice of venue and the Filipino community.

Despite these episodes, Dr Mathew Mathews, senior research fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies, said many Singaporeans have positive experiences with Filipinos, whether as colleagues or domestic helpers.

But Singapore Management University law don Eugene Tan said this familiarity can, at times, breed contempt. "The close proximity and exposure to each other make the apparent differences real, more grating and divisive."

Veteran PR practitioner Cho Pei Lin said these differences are accentuated with the rise of social media: "While these anti-social comments may go unnoticed in the past if one talks about it at a party or over dinner, now the line which employers are toeing is deciding how much their workers can say before taking action."

Madam Luz Campos, 58, a magazine general manager who is from the Philippines but has become a Singapore citizen, said Mr Bello's dismissal was necessary. "It is so that such incidents don't repeat themselves as they only worsen the relations Singaporeans have with Filipinos who work here," she said.