Prison time for Pirate Bay proprietors

by UPI

STOCKHOLM, Sweden -- Four of the founders of the Swedish Pirate Bay file-sharing Web site have been sentenced to a year in jail for violating copyright laws.

Frederik Neij, Gottfrid Svartholm Warg, Carl Lundstrom and Peter Sunde were found guilty after a trial, sentenced to jail and ordered to pay $3.6 million in damages, the BBC reported.

Warner Bros., Sony Music Entertainment, EMI and Columbia Pictures had been seeking $13 million in damages.

John Kennedy, the chairman of the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry, told the BBC the verdict was a victory.

"These guys weren't making a principled stand, they were out to line their own pockets. There was nothing meritorious about their behavior, it was reprehensible. The Pirate Bay did immense harm and the damages awarded doesn't even get close to compensation, but we never claimed it did," Kennedy said. "There has been a perception that piracy is OK and that the music industry should just have to accept it. This verdict will change that."

Lawyers for the defendants say they will appeal the verdict, the BBC reported.

"This wasn't a criminal trial, it was a political trial. It is just gross beyond description that you can jail four people for providing infrastructure," said Rickard Falkvinge, leader of a group trying to reform laws around copyright and patents in the digital age.

"There is a lot of anger in Sweden right now," Falkvinge added. "File-sharing is an institution here and while I can't encourage people to break copyright law, I'm not following it and I don't agree with it. Today's events make file-sharing a hot political issue and we're going to take this to the European Parliament.

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