

Murdoch launches 'Sun on Sunday'

February 17 2012, by Alice Ritchie



News Corporation chairman and chief executive Rupert Murdoch leaves his London home. Murdoch said Friday his News International company would launch a Sunday edition of The Sun, in an email to staff as he visited the paper's headquarters on Friday.

Rupert Murdoch said Friday he will launch a Sunday version of his top-selling British tabloid The Sun, vowing to stand by demoralised staff despite the arrest of senior reporters over bribery claims.

The media tycoon said a [criminal investigation](#) into claims that [journalists](#) paid police and other public officials for information would not cause The Sun to suffer the same fate as its sister paper, the [News of the World](#).

Murdoch shut the News of the World, a Sunday tabloid, in July over a phone-hacking scandal, which has also spawned three police probes and

a government-ordered inquiry into the standards and ethics of the British press.

In an email to staff at News Corporation's British newspaper division, where he visited the [newsrooms](#) Friday, Murdoch said: "We will build on The Sun's proud heritage by launching the Sun on Sunday very soon.

"Having a winning paper is the best answer to our critics."

He paid tribute to the "superb work" of journalists at The Sun, the first British newspaper he bought in 1969, adding that the tabloid "is part of me".

Chris Bryant, a [lawmaker](#) from the opposition Labour party who was a victim of phone-hacking, said however that the launch of the Sun on Sunday was "massively premature".

He said Murdoch should have waited until the inquiry into press practices had completed its hearings before making the decision.

The announcement confirms rumours circulating since mid-2011 that Murdoch would seek to publish an alternative to the News of the World, which had a circulation of 2.7 million when it was closed down.

The future of The Sun was clouded by the arrests last weekend of five of its senior journalists on allegations of bribery, in addition to five former and current staff members arrested on similar charges since November.

Murdoch, the 80-year-old founder and chairman of the US-based [News Corp.](#), flew into Britain late Thursday to take personal charge of the crisis, amid signs that staff morale was collapsing.

Many journalists are furious at the role of News Corp. in the arrests,

which were based on information uncovered by the Management and Standards Committee set up by the company in response to the phone-hacking furore.

Murdoch said his company must obey the law, insisting: "Illegal activities simply cannot and will not be tolerated -- at any of our publications."

However, he also said the journalists arrested would have their suspensions lifted, and would be given legal support to fight the allegations against them.

"Everyone is innocent unless proven otherwise," he said.

His comments were welcomed by journalists, some of whom have been seeking advice about suing the company.

Leading human rights lawyer Geoffrey Robertson said in a commentary this week in The Times -- also owned by Murdoch -- that journalists have a right under the Human Rights Act to protect confidential sources.

David Wooding, who was political editor of the News of the World, tweeted: "Great news for all News International staff... this will boost morale no end."

The Sun sells 2.5 million copies a day with its diet of sex and scandal, making it the biggest-selling title in a crowded British newspaper market, but commentators have warned the [bribery](#) claims may yet still fell the title.

Steven Barnett, a media professor at University of Westminster in London, told AFP that Murdoch's long-term loyalty to the The Sun would be tested.

"In the big picture, for [News Corporation](#), The Sun is a flea," he said. "But in terms of his own particular attachment... at the moment, he is wanting to make a stand.

"We have to ask how long that will continue. And to what extent if he gets more pressure, particularly from the authorities in America."

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Citation: Murdoch launches 'Sun on Sunday' (2012, February 17) retrieved 25 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-02-murdoch-sun-sunday.html>

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