Clooney slams skittish Hollywood after Sony hack

December 19 2014

George Clooney and Amal Alamuddin in Venice on September 29, 2014 after a civil ceremony to officialise their wedding

Film star George Clooney slammed the Hollywood movie industry for failing to stand up against the cyber threats that prompted Sony Pictures to cancel release of the movie "The Interview."

Clooney, one of the most influential figures in the US movie industry,

said in an interview that fellow celebrities and industry figures declined to sign a petition he circulated in support of the satirical comedy, whose Christmas Day release has been scrapped.

No one, the actor said, was brave enough to sign the petition, out of fear that doing so could make them vulnerable to a hacking attack like the one that befell Sony.

"It was a large number of people. It was sent to basically the heads of every place," Clooney said in an interview published Friday by the entertainment news website "Deadline."

To a person, the reply was "'I can't sign this'," he said.

Clooney's petition decried the "chilling and devastating" cyber attack that revealed thousands of emails, scripts, and personal data at Sony, but said the implications go far beyond the company.

"This is not just an attack on Sony. It involves ev'ry studio, every network, every business and every individual in this country," Clooney's petition read, as published by Deadline.

Workers remove a poster for The Interview from a billboard in Hollywood on December 18, 2014

"We know that to give in to these criminals now will open the door for any group that would threaten freedom of expression, privacy and personal liberty," it added, urging Hollywood to "stand together."

"The Interview," starring James Franco and Seth Rogen and depicting a fictional plot to assassinate North Korean dictator Kim Jong-Un, had been due to hit US cinemas on December 25.

But Sony Pictures canceled its release of the satirical comedy after threats from hackers, causing widespread consternation in the movie world and triggering concerns about freedom of expression.

Warnings from the so-called Guardians of Peace hacking group invoked the September 11, 2001 attacks, prompting a number of US cinema chains to cancel plans to screen the film.

Clooney criticized the decision to yank the movie.

"You have someone threaten to blow up buildings, and all of a sudden everybody has to bow down," he told Deadline.

"Sony... pulled the movie because all the theaters said they were not going to run it. And they said they were not going to run it because they talked to their lawyers and those lawyers said if somebody dies in one of these, then you're going to be responsible."

He added that the cyber attack—and Hollywood's reaction to it—has set a dangerous precedent.

"This affects not just movies, this affects every part of business that we have," the actor said.

"What happens if a newsroom decides to go with a story, and a country or an individual or corporation decides they don't like it?

"Forget the hacking part of it. You have someone threaten to blow up buildings, and all of a sudden everybody has to bow down," Clooney said.

"This is a silly comedy, but the truth is, what it now says about us is a whole lot. We have a responsibility to stand up against this."

© 2014 AFP

provided for information purposes only.