

Sweden: hundreds protest Pirate Bay conviction

April 19 2009, By LOUISE NORDSTROM , Associated Press Writer

(AP) -- Wearing bandanas and waving Jolly Roger flags, hundreds of supporters of file-sharing hub The Pirate Bay demonstrated on Saturday against a Swedish court's conviction of the Internet site's organizers.

The Stockholm district court on Friday sentenced Gottfrid Svartholm Warg, Peter Sunde, Fredrik Neij and Carl Lundstrom to one year in prison each for helping millions of [Pirate Bay](#) users commit copyright violations of movies, music and computer games.

The court also ordered them to pay 30 million kronor (\$3.6 million) in damages to international entertainment companies, including Warner Bros., [Sony Music Entertainment](#), EMI and Columbia Pictures.

The entertainment industry applauded the move, calling it a landmark decision protecting the rights of those whose livelihood depend on creative activity.

All four defendants have vowed to appeal the verdict.

The rallies against "judicial murder" occurred in Stockholm, Goteborg, Karlstad and Lund and were organized by The Pirate Party. The political party, which supports free file-sharing for noncommercial use, said its membership rose by more than 20 percent to about 20,000 after the court announced its verdict.

Police spokeswoman Birgitta Nilsen said at least 500 mostly young

people were protesting in Stockholm alone, many supporting the Pirate Bay defendants by wearing bandanas and carrying skull and crossbones flags.

The Pirate Party does not have any formal ties to The Pirate Bay, but has expressed its support of the site on several occasions.

Party Chairman and founder Rickard Falkvinge received loud cheers as he addressed the black-clad crowd at the Medborgarplatsen square in downtown Stockholm, demanding that the defendants to be freed from the charges.

"The establishment and the politicians have declared war against our whole generation," he said, calling on "file-sharing for the people."

The Pirate Bay doesn't host copyright-protected material, but directs users to content through so-called torrent files. It has an estimated 22 million users worldwide.

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Citation: Sweden: hundreds protest Pirate Bay conviction (2009, April 19) retrieved 19 September 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-04-sweden-hundreds-protest-pirate-bay.html>

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