Sweden charges Pirate Bay with copyright offences

STOCKHOLM (Reuters) - Four men linked to the popular file-sharing site Pirate Bay were charged by a Swedish prosecutor on Thursday with conspiracy to break copyright law and being an accessory.

The site was created in 2003 by a Swedish anti-copyright group but was soon taken over by individuals. It helps surfers swap mostly copyright-protected music, movie and game files.

Pirate Bay co-founders Fredrik Neij, Gottfrid Svartholm, spokesman Peter Sunde and Carl Lundstrom, who is reported to have helped fund one of the world's most visited Web sites, could face up to two years in jail if convicted.

The group that controls it says since no copyrighted material is stored on Pirate Bay's servers and no exchange of files actually takes place there, so they cannot be held responsible for what material is being exchanged.

Swedish prosecutor Hakan Roswall disagrees.

In a document filed with Stockholm district court on Thursday, Roswall said that by financing, programming and administering the site, the four men promoted other people's infringement of property rights.

Sunde, one of the charged, said the site had not broken any Swedish laws.

"I don't see why they file charges when they are so weak," Sunde told Reuters Television in an interview at his home in Malmo, southern Sweden. "I think it is more a game to make us look bad in the media."

Pirate Bay is essentially a tracker of, and a directory of, links to Internet files available for swapping.
Roswall told Reuters last week this was "a classic example of accessory -- to act as intermediary between people who commit crimes, whether it's in the physical or the virtual world."

With infrastructure at secret locations throughout the world, shutting the site might prove difficult.

The case is partly based on evidence collected in a 2006 raid against Pirate Bay's servers, which were then all located in Stockholm. Pirate Bay says it does not know now where the servers are located.

Files that Roswall said had been illegally shared with the help of Pirate Bay include The Beatles' "Let It Be," the feature film "Harry Potter and The Goblet of Fire" and the game "World of Warcraft-Invasion."

Plaintiffs include Warner, MGM, Columbia Pictures, 20th Century Fox Films, Sony BMG, Universal and EMI.

(Reporting by Anna Ringstrom; editing by Robert Woodward)
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