Google Execs Conviction in Italian Court Bodes Ill for Internet Free Expression

February 24, 2010

An Italian judge today convicted three Google executives of privacy violations stemming from user-generated content uploaded to the company's online video hosting platform. The verdict, while deeply disturbing personally for the Google executives, has far reaching negative implications for free expression online in Italy specifically, as well as global internet free speech generally.

"It's an old adage that bad cases make bad law and today an Italian court made bad law that could sap the vitality from the Italian Internet and impact Internet freedom far beyond the Italian peninsula," write CDT President Leslie Harris in her latest Huffington Post column. [1]

Harris further commented [2] on the ramifications of the case in a statement CDT issued today:

> Today’s stunning verdict sets an extremely dangerous precedent that threatens free expression and chills innovation on the global Internet. This is precisely the sort of action by a western democracy that undermines Secretary Clinton's call for global Internet freedom. The principle that technological intermediaries should be protected from liability for content posted by users has been a cornerstone of Internet freedom. It is enshrined in both EU and U.S. law.

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- Italy
- Google
- global Internet freedom
- Free Expression

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