

World's press protests against seizure of AP's phone records

WASHINGTON, US / PARIS, FRANCE / DARMSTADT, GERMANY: The World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) and the World Editors Forum have protested to United States Attorney General Eric Holder against the seizure of thousands of Associated Press phone records, saying the action damages US news reporting and provides encouragement to repressive regimes around the world.



"This seizure has a profound impact on news reporting in the US by undermining the protection afforded to confidential sources," the global organisations said in a letter to Holder. "Furthermore, its implications have important international significance, as repressive regimes will use the US example to justify their own actions in exposing whistle-blowers and prosecuting journalists and those who uncover wrongdoing."

WAN-IFRA and WEF, which represent 18,000 newspapers, 15,000 online sites and more than 3,000 companies in 120 countries, called on the Attorney General to return or destroy all the seized phone records and to support a federal shield law to guarantee the protection of journalists' sources.

The full letter can be read at <http://www.wan-ifra.org/node/77925/>.

WAN-IFRA and WEF have joined a growing outcry against the seizure. AP was notified on 10 May that records of calls made from 20 of the news agency's and reporters' phone lines during April and May 2012 had been secretly seized.

The purpose of the seizure was, reportedly, to identify the news agency's sources for a report published on 7 May 2012 revealing details of a CIA operation to thwart an Al-Qaeda plot to place a bomb on an airplane bound for the United States.

AP reported it had held the story until it had government assurances that national security concerns had passed. "The White House had said there was no credible threat to the American people in May of 2012. The AP story suggested otherwise, and we felt that was important information and the public deserved to know it," the report said.

AP President and CEO Gary Pruitt wrote to Holder on 13 May, saying: "There can be no possible justification for such an overbroad collection of the telephone communications of The Associated Press and its reporters. These records potentially reveal communications with confidential sources across all of the newsgathering activities undertaken by the AP during a two-month period, provide a road map to AP's newsgathering operations, and disclose information about AP's activities and

operations that the government has no conceivable right to know. We regard this action by the Department of Justice as a serious interference with AP's constitutional rights to gather and report the news."

More on WAN-IFRA's press freedom activities can be found at <http://www.wan-ifra.org/microsites/press-freedom>.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>