

[作者] The World Association of Newspapers
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[摘要] The World Association of Newspapers told a Danish court today that to convict and imprison three journalists on trial for publishing intelligence secrets would be a major blow to press freedom and undermine fundamental democratic principles.
[关键词] The World Association of Newspapers;Journalist

The World Association of Newspapers told a Danish court today that to convict and imprison three journalists on trial for publishing intelligence secrets would be a major blow to press freedom and undermine fundamental democratic principles.

"We are very concerned about the growing use and abuse of national security and secrecy legislation by governments and other authorities intent on preventing publication of matters of vital importance to the citizens of their countries", Timothy Bolding, Chief Executive Officer of WAN, told the City Court of Copenhagen, where he was called to the witness stand.

Chief of Berlingske Tidende, Niels Lund, and reporters Jesper Larsen and Michael Bjerrer Rasmussen. The three risk between six months and two years imprisonment if found guilty.

"Convictions in this case would not only be a stain on the deserved reputation of Denmark as a country with a strong tradition of upholding the free press, but would send very negative signals to other governments, particularly in authoritarian and totalitarian countries, that it is acceptable to punish journalists for publishing information of public interest."

The three journalists are being charged over the 2004 disclosure, in alleged violation of the Danish Penal Code, of classified reports from the country's intelligence services - the DDIS - that assessed the information available to them about the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. The intelligence officer who leaked the reports and was subsequently jailed for six months, reduced on appeal to four, said at his trial that he felt Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen had exaggerated the information to convince the public of the need for war.

Mr Bolding argued to the Court that Berlingske Tidende and the journalists had published the leaked information, after taking precautions that it was true and that it would not endanger lives, in the legitimate public interest of informing its readers and other Danish citizens of the basis for the engagement of Denmark in war.

He informed the judge that several similar cases had either been tried or were pending in various democratic countries but that, based on information available to WAN, all had either been thrown out, resulted in acquittals or overturned by higher jurisdictions.

The case, which began yesterday, is expected to conclude next week. The Paris-based WAN, the global organisation for the newspaper industry, defends and promotes press freedom world-wide. It represents 18,000 newspapers; its membership includes 73 national newspaper associations, newspapers and newspaper executives in 102 countries, 11 news agencies and nine regional and world-wide press groups.