

**WAN-IFRA is the World  
Association of Newspapers  
and News Publishers**

Its mission is to protect the rights of journalists across the world to operate free media, and provide its members with professional services to help their business prosper in a digital world and perform their crucial role in open societies.

With formal representative status at the United Nations, UNESCO and the Council of Europe, it derives its authority from its global network of leading news publishing companies and technology entrepreneurs, and its legitimacy from its 80 national association members representing 18,000 publications in 120 countries.

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His Excellency Rodrigo Duterte  
President of the Philippines  
Manila, Philippines

18 January 2018

Your Excellency,

We are writing on behalf of the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) and the World Editors Forum, which together represent 18,000 publications, 15,000 online sites and over 3,000 companies in more than 120 countries, to express our serious concern at the order to close independent news website Rappler.

According to reports, on 11 January the Philippines' Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) revoked Rappler's Certificate of Incorporation, effectively delivering a closure order to the company. The SEC ruled that the company had contravened regulations prohibiting foreign ownership of mass media. It rejected Rappler's contention that Omidyar Network, a fund created by eBay founder Pierre Omidyar, did not "own" the company as its investment gave the fund no voting rights or say in how the company is run.

The revocation of Rappler's registration is the latest in a string of state and media actions against the website, which has frequently been critical of your presidency.

While acknowledging your country's right to decide on limits of foreign ownership of media companies, the closure of Rappler appears to be a political manoeuvre and sends a chilling message to independent journalists across the country. It will also discourage foreign investment in an important industry to the detriment of both domestic businesses and wider society, which risks losing a vital independent voice.

Rappler is planning to file an appeal against the ruling, which is due to take effect in 15 days.

We respectfully call on you to take all possible steps to ensure that the decision to order the closure of Rappler is rescinded so that the website can continue to play an active role in civic debate and carry out the watchdog function of the press. Its closure would be an indelible stain on the Philippines record of freedom of expression.

We look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,



Michael Golden  
President  
World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers



David Callaway  
President  
World Editors Forum

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