



## Student vows to fight extradition

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A Sheffield student who created a website which helped people watch films and TV shows for free has vowed to fight a court ruling which found he can be extradited to the US to face copyright infringement allegations.

Sheffield Hallam University undergraduate Richard O'Dwyer, 23, allegedly earned thousands of pounds through advertising on the TVShack website before it was closed down by the US authorities. He faces jail if convicted of the allegations, which were brought following a crackdown by the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency.

His lawyer Ben Cooper has argued that the site did not store copyright material itself and merely pointed users to other sites, in the same way that Google and Yahoo operate. Mr Cooper also said his client would be the first British citizen to be extradited for such an offence and would effectively become a "guinea pig" for copyright law in the US.

His mother Julia O'Dwyer, from Chesterfield, said she was "disgusted" by the decision and claimed the UK's extradition treaty with the US "needs fixing fast".

District Judge Quentin Purdy said in his ruling at Westminster Magistrates' Court: "There are said to be direct consequences of criminal activity by Richard O'Dwyer in the USA albeit by him never leaving the north of England. Such a state of affairs does not demand a trial here if the competent UK authorities decline to act and does, in my judgment, permit one in the USA."

Mr O'Dwyer, who was bailed, said outside court: "I am obviously disappointed with the judge's decision today. I think I have got faith in the High Court for making the right decision."

He said the website had "helped me no end with my studies" and said when he first set it up he "didn't even think it would get that popular to be honest". The US authorities allege that he had received more than 230,000 US dollars (around £147,000) in advertising revenue since January 2008, until the site was shut down in 2010.

District Judge Purdy said in his ruling that when O'Dwyer was arrested by City of London Police in November 2010 he accepted earning approximately £15,000 per month from online advertisements.

His mother, who broke down in tears towards the end of her time speaking to waiting journalists, said she was "very disappointed, in fact disgusted".

"So disappointed that the man can't think outside of the extradition box. Disappointed with this Government for signing us up to this treaty which has opened the floodgates to America to come and seize British citizens without even having set foot out of this country and that extradition law needs fixing fast."