



## Press Release:

# 'World's largest paedophile ring 'uncovered'

International police led by a UK team have shut down the largest internet paedophile ring yet discovered.

This illegal global forum had 70,000 followers at its height, leading to 4,000 intelligence reports being sent to police across 30 countries.

The operation has so far identified 670 suspects and 230 abused children.

Alan Bell, Director of the New Zealand based child rights organisation ECPAT Child ALERT says "For those who doubt the scale of online offending here is proof that strong action needs to be taken to prevent this form of sexual exploitation of children. All of these children are real and this fact should not be overlooked just because their images appear on the Internet. If offending on this scale was not hidden by secrecy and anonymity there would be an outcry from all reasonable members of society."

The three-year investigation, Operation Rescue, was led by investigators from the UK's Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (Ceop). Along with the Netherlands and the UK, suspects have been identified in Australia, Italy, Canada, New Zealand and Thailand.

Detectives say 184 people have been arrested - 121 of them were in the UK. To date, 33 have been convicted. Some 60 children have been protected in the UK.

"Although offenders may feel safe this case demonstrates that the authorities have developed techniques that are able to penetrate the devious methods employed to escape detection" states Mr Bell "This milestone case should serve as a strong deterrent to those who choose to flout the law and impose terrible suffering on innocent children."

*ECPAT Child ALERT is a registered charitable trust working to prevent the sexual exploitation of children.*

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