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Sentenza Fininvest, la notizia fa il giro del mondo - Berlusconi firm ordered to pay more than \$800 million to rival

Rome, Italy (CNN) -- Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's financial holding company, Fininvest, was ordered Saturday to pay more than 560 million euros (\$801 million) in damages to the rival media group CIR.

The decision was made by appeal court judges in the northern Italian city of Milan, the leading Italian news agency ANSA reported.

"It's a sentence that leaves us astonished, without words," Marina Berlusconi, the prime minister's daughter and chair of his Fininvest holding company, said in a statement.

The appeal court ruling comes after two decades of dispute between Fininvest and CIR, the holding company of Italian industrialist and media magnate Carlo De Benedetti.

Berlusconi's holding company was accused of bribing a judge in 1991 in a case involving the sale of the publishing company Mondadori, in favor of Fininvest.

The judge and a former lawyer for Berlusconi were found guilty of corruption in a criminal case in 2003. CIR also brought a civil case seeking damages.

The civil case was first decided in 2009, when Berlusconi was ordered to pay a 750 million euro fine. Saturday's appeal court ruling upheld the verdict but reduced the fine to 540 million euros, plus about 20 million in interest and trial expenses.

Niccolo Ghedini, a lawyer for Berlusconi, told reporters, that Saturday's court ruling "has no logic under a procedural point of view, as well as if you consider the facts."

Saturday's sentence comes into effect immediately.

"This means that Berlusconi has to pay, even if he plans to prepare an appeal at the high court," Franco Coppi, a well-known Italian lawyer who is not involved in the case, told CNN.