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<http://www.rsf.org/nicaragua-nicaraguan-journalists-need-27-02-2015,47628.html>

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Americas - Nicaragua

Day of the Journalist

## Nicaraguan journalists need protection, access to information

27 February 2015

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For Day of the Journalist, celebrated on 1 March in Nicaragua, Reporters Without Borders has taken a look at the current state of media freedom in this Central American nation, where journalists critical of the government often encounter restrictions on their access to information.

No journalist has been killed in connection with their work since Daniel Ortega was returned to power in 2007 but this should not divert attention from the fact that many journalists are the victims of stigmatization, threats and violence.

A [journalists' collective complained to the national police](#) last July about the failure to protect them from violence by "pro-government groups" when they cover opposition demonstrations.

When they go to demonstrations, journalists are often regarded as supporters rather than independent observers. The public tends to see their presence as the expression of a personal political position, and therefore think that they only have themselves to blame if they are targeted.

A resolution adopted by the UN Human Rights Council on 28 March 2014 called on governments "to pay particular attention to the safety of journalists and media workers covering peaceful protests, taking into account their specific role, exposure and vulnerability."

Media freedom in Nicaragua is also restricted by article 52 of its constitution, which limits the right of criticism to "constructive" criticism. In effect, this enshrines the idea of "permitted information" and state control of the media, inasmuch as the state assumes the exclusive right to decide what is "constructive" and what isn't.

The Nicaraguan state should instead be guaranteeing a transparent and pluralist debate that allows its citizens to make free choices about their future.

*"As regards recently initiated development projects such as the Interoceanic Grand Canal, the government has a duty to provide its citizens with all the tools they need to understand the political challenges determining the country's long-term future,"* said Claire San Filippo, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Americas desk.

Despite Law 621 on access to public information, adopted in 2007, the authorities continue to grant news media access to state-held information in a discretionary manner.

*"On Day of the Journalist, Reporters Without Borders urges the Nicaraguan authorities to grant access to information to all the media, without discrimination,"* San Filippo added. *"The state must foster fair media access to public information and end practices that encourage self-censorship."*

In the absence of any regulation, state advertising continues to be allocated unfairly. Media that do not criticize the government are more likely to get state advertising and the extra income that entails. This undermines media pluralism and fosters self-censorship.

Nicaragua is ranked 74th out of 180 countries in the 2015 [press freedom index](#) that Reporters Without Borders published in February.

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