

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/grenada-government-blamed-for-newspaper-27-03-2012,42195.html>

Americas - Grenada

Political pressure

Government blamed for newspaper reporter's dismissal

27 March 2012

There are strong grounds for suspecting that the privately-owned *Grenada Advocate* weekly's dismissal of reporter **Rawle Titus** on 23 March was the result of direct political pressure by Prime Minister Tillman Thomas (photo) and his press secretary. Reporters Without Borders calls on the government to provide a frank explanation of a matter liable to endanger media independence.

"We understand the alarm expressed by the Media Workers Association of Grenada ([MWAG](#)) ever since the *Grenada Advocate* told Titus his contract with was being terminated," Reporters Without Borders said. "The evidence brought to our notice is solid enough to substantiate the claim that there was direct political interference in the functioning of a reputable independent newspaper.

"We urge Prime Minister Thomas to disown the pressure that his office brought to bear on the *Grenada Advocate's* management and to reiterate the commitment to freedom of information that he expressed when he took office in 2008."



Prime minister's response

Reporters Without Borders also hopes that the *Grenada Advocate* will reverse its decision to fire Titus.

In the 9 March article that apparently prompted his dismissal, Titus reported that the prime minister had selected the ruling National Democratic Congress' candidates for the next general elections without bothering to consult with the party's leaders. Other media have since carried reports that tend to support his claim.

The prime minister's press secretary, Richard Simon, wrote twice to the *Grenada Advocate* requesting a retraction and apology. It was after receipt of the second letter – of which we have been sent the text of key passages – that Titus was told that his contract would end on 31 March.

The MWAG has told us that this is not the first case of its kind. Two radio stations also recently received warnings from the prime minister's office about their political reporting, the association said.

Although the Organization of East Caribbean States (OECS), to which Grenada belongs, achieved a good ranking (25th) in the latest Reporters Without Borders press freedom index, cases of direct political pressure on journalists or their news media are occasionally reported.

There has, however, not been a case of this gravity since the [Grenada Today](#) weekly had to be liquidated in 2009 as a result of a libel suit by former prime minister Keith Mitchell.
