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<http://www.rsf.org/honduras-call-for-threatened-radio-director-16-05-2015,47898.html>

Americas - Honduras

Grave threats

Call for threatened radio director to be given effective protection

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Reporters Without Borders condemns the death threats against *Radio Globo* director David Romero and calls on the national human rights agency to guarantee the safety of Romero and his staff.

Romero said on the air on 14 May that he received the threats after revealing information about an alleged case of embezzlement of government funds that is said to involve President Juan Orlando Hernández.

Speaking on "Interpretando la Noticia," a programme broadcast by *Radio Globo* and its sister *Globo TV*, Romero said he had obtained a video of a meeting implicating Hernández and the managers of 30 bogus companies that were created to embezzle funds from the Honduran Institute for Social Security (IHSS). Hernández was congressional speaker at the time.

This is not the first time *Radio Globo* has exposed this kind of scandal at the IHSS. In 2013, cheques worth a total of 50 million lempiras (2 million euros) were allegedly sent to the ruling National Party and to companies that were fronts for collecting funds to finance Hernández's election campaign.

Denying claims that he was involved in a conspiracy against the president, Romero said he was revealing this information solely out of journalistic duty. He added that he was ready to face any further threats against him.

According to the information obtained by Reporters Without Borders, Romero learned of the existence of these threats from an intelligence official, who told him that a contract had been put out on him and that two hit-men had even been hired to carry it out.

This warning should not be taken lightly. *Radio Globo* and *Globo TV* have paid dearly for their status as opposition media outlets since the 2009 coup. Five of their employees have been murdered since 2011. The latest was [Erick Arriaga, a journalist who was gunned down on 23 February](#) without a thorough investigation ever being carried out.

"We hail the courage of *Radio Globo's* director, who continues to do his job of providing information in the public interest, despite the grave threats being made against him," Reporters Without Borders secretary-general Christophe Deloire said.

"Although police protection has just been put in place, it is essential that the Honduran National Commission for Human Rights (CONADEH) should ensure that the protection is effective and that an independent, impartial and thorough investigation is being carried out to identify those responsible for the threats."

A key witness in the IHSS scandal was meanwhile gunned down on the afternoon of 14 May in the northern city of San Pedro Sula. At least 300 million dollars were allegedly involved in the embezzlement case exposed by *Radio Globo*, which dates back to 2012/13.

IHSS director Mario Roberto Zelaya Rojas was fired in November 2013, after the initial revelations, and was arrested in September 2014. The case is all the sensitive because the government had a law adopted at the start of this month that privatizes the IHSS. The effects include a cut in public funding and a cut in the size of IHSS pensions.

[Honduras is one of Latin America's most dangerous countries for journalists](#). Murders of journalists have risen since a military coup in 2009 and [laws adopted by Hernández reinforcing the militarization of society and control mechanisms](#) have directly affected access to information.

[Honduras is ranked 132nd out of 180 countries](#) in the 2015 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index.

(Logo: AFP)
