

Reporters Without Borders

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Americas - Paraguay

Purge

In continuing purge, 27 employees fired from state TV

5 September 2012

Twenty-seven journalists, technicians and other employees of state-owned *TV Pública* were denied entry to the TV station's Asunción headquarters yesterday on the grounds that they "cannot continue" to work for the station.

Some had heard talk on 31 August of a new wave of dismissals, but none was notified in advanced. During a "Micrófono Abierto" (Open Microphone) broadcast on the evening of 22 June, most of them expressed opposition to Fernando Lugo's removal as president in a parliamentary vote earlier that day. And most of them had been subject to frequent suspensions since then.

"[An initial purge](#) within the state-owned media created by President Lugo occurred three weeks after the parliamentary 'coup' against him," Reporters Without Borders said. "In view of the fait accompli methods used yesterday, we cannot believe the bureaucratic explanation offered by the government's information department.

"The dismissal of 27 journalists in violation of the most elementary rules of the right to work is unfortunately just prolonging the witch-hunt that began after the president's removal in June. This serious attack on pluralism will accentuate the divisions within this unhappy and isolated country. We are ready to support the purged journalists when they take this case to the courts."

Information minister Martín Sannemann blamed the mass dismissals on the fact that an agreement under which the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI) provided *TV Pública* with the funds to cover their salaries had expired on 31 August.

The minister's explanation was "false," the purged journalists said, pointing out that *TV Pública* signed an agreement with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) before the supplementary one with the OIE, and that *TV Pública's* previous management obtained a total of 10 billion guaranis (2 millions euros) for salaries, more than enough to keep paying them.

The journalists are all the more angry because, during a meeting on 15 August, Sannemann had promised that there would be no dismissals, just some delay in paying salaries.

Former project manager **Jazmín Acuña**, one of those who have been dismissed, said: "Many of them learned that they had been fired when they arrived at work this morning. The security guard had a list of people who were to be denied entry."

Another of the purge victims, journalist and producer **Manuel Cuenca**, said: "This blacklist clearly constitutes ideological persecution against journalists who were recruited by the Lugo administration. It is one of the arbitrary moves that Federico Franco's putschist regime had made against freedom of expression."

As well as Acuña and Cuenca, the newly dismissed employees are **Diego Verón, Joaquin Serrano, Ricardo Quintana, Cristina Martinez, Patricia Armoa, Deisy Diaz Ruiz, Maricarmen Sequera, Mario Saldivar, Aleydis Franco, Hugo Isasi, Sergio Cáceres, René Pérez, Ingrid**

Groos, Emiliano Miranda, Héctor Ledesma, Rubén Romero, Edgar Pérez, Carlos Vera, David Mac Cruz, René Santacruz, Esteban Ortega, Sady Barrios, Germán Solís, Diego Segovia and Federico Velázquez.

There has [a series of disturbing developments for freedom of information](#) ever since Lugo's ouster in June, while impunity continues to be a problem. One of the latest examples is the March 2011 [murder](#) of **Merardo Romero**, the head of programming at community radio station *La Voz de Ytakyry*. The judicial authorities have treated the presumed instigators with an outrageous degree of indulgence.

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