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Americas - Honduras

Unfounded charges

Journalist accused of sedition for doing her job in covering a political conflict

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Albertina Manueles Pérez, correspondent for Radio Progreso, is facing prosecution for broadcasting a communiqué in which an indigenous community refuses to recognize a mayor whose election they claim was fraudulent.

Reporters Without Borders condemns, again, the official harassment to which *Radio Progreso* is regularly subjected.

Pérez has been ordered to appear in the Intibucá department court. The communiqué that gave rise to the case against her was issued by residents of San Francisco Opalaca, a town in western Honduras whose majority is made up of members of the Lenca indigenous community. They denied recognition to José Socorro Sánchez of the National Party of Honduras, officially deemed the winner of the vote, held during national elections in November 2013.

The Civic Counsel of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (Copinh), whose membership is made up of 35 indigenous communities in the regions, concluded that the election's actual winner was Entimo Vásquez, a member of the Lenca community who was the candidate of the Freedom and Refoundation Party (Libre).

Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization, to which Honduras is a signatory, guarantees indigenous populations' freedoms. These include the right to their own media. But community radio stations linked to the Copinh, one of the most representative indigenous peoples' organizations at the national level, are enduring constant harassment. One example: the antenna of radio *Puca de Opalaca*, which broadcasts in the same region, was damaged in an attack on 30 May.

"Reporters Without Borders demands that all charges against Albertina Manueles Pérez be dropped," said Camille Soulier, head of the organization's Americas Desk. *"Radio Progreso and community radio stations regularly face attack as well as prosecution aimed at their content, which officials call subversive."*

Soulier added that the press freedom organization *"endorses the recommendations of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, which calls on the Honduran government to protect the staff and contributors of Radio Progreso."*

The Honduran government has ignored previous demands for protection of station staff that the commission issued in 2009, 2010 and 2011. On 11 April, [Carlos Meijía Orellana](#), a *Radio Progreso* contributor, was killed at his home following numerous death threats.

On 18 February 2013, [Isaac Leonardo Guevara Amaya](#), *Radio Progreso's* correspondent in the northern city of Tela, was threatened by police. He and other Honduran journalists who cover sensitive issues such as land conflicts, effects of mining on the environment, and purges of police forces, are regularly silenced by violence.

Honduras ranks 129th of 180 countries in the Reporters Without Borders world [press freedom index](#).

Slideshow: Radio Progreso

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