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Americas - Ecuador

## Cartoon sanctioned Ruling on cartoon reveals communication law's dangerous side

3 February 2014

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The Office of the Superintendent of Communication, a post created by the [June 2013 communication law](#), has given cartoonist **Xavier Bonilla** three days from today to publish a correction of a cartoon deemed to have defamed the government.

The office has also ordered *El Universo*, the Guayaquil-based newspaper that published the cartoon on 28 December, to pay a fine equivalent to 2 per cent of his income during the past three months.

The cartoon by Bonilla, who uses the pen-name of Bonil, criticized a police raid on the home of Fernando Villavicencio, a journalist and opposition deputy assistant. President Rafael Correa apparently did not seek the joke. *El Universo* has agreed to pay the fine but Bonilla plans to challenge the order.

"How can you 'correct' a cartoon, which is by definition exaggerated?" said Lucie Morillon, Reporters Without Borders head of research. "How will Bonilla avoid having to criticize all of his future cartoons whenever they displease the authorities? This decision is absurd and dangerous.

"When we met Superintendent of Communication Carlos Ochoa and communication minister Fernando Alvarado in Quito last November, we cautioned them about this repressive aspect of the communication law, which tries to impose control over published or broadcast content.

"This decision is without doubt the worst possible way to begin implementing a law that we had commended for its attempts to regulate broadcast frequency allocation. Not to speak of the problem posed by the fact that, in issuing this order, the Office of the Superintendent is acting as a 'special court,' which violates constitutional principles.

"For the sake of freedom of expression, we call on the authorities to drop this case against Bonilla."

