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Americas - Guatemala

Community radio

Officials prevent indigenous radio station from reopening

26 March 2015

Reporters Without Borders is alarmed by the continuing persecution of community radio stations in Guatemala, where the mayor of Santa Eulalia, in the western department of Huehuetenango, forcibly prevented members of the indigenous Mayan community from reopening their station last week.

Indigenous representatives had wanted to organize a ceremony on 20 March to formally reopen *Radio Snuq Jolom Konob*, closed by the mayor two months ago, but the mayor and his supporters, some of them armed, prevented the ceremony from going ahead.

Prensa Comunitaria reporter **Lucía Ixchiú** said they insulted, threatened and roughed up community representatives and journalists.

"We are disturbed by this use of violence against Radio Snuq Jolom Konob by the local authorities and their supporters in Santa Eulalia," said Claire San Filippo, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Americas desk.

"This was unfortunately typical of the hostility that the Guatemalan authorities show towards the media, especially community radio stations. Those suspected of being responsible for this act of violence must be brought to justice in order to end impunity."

Among the recent stories covered by Radio Snuq Jolom Konob was local opposition to the company Hidro Santa Cruz's construction of a hydro-electric dam in an area where members of several Mayan indigenous groups – Akateko, Chuj, Popti' and Q'anjob'al – are in the majority.

Its coverage of the way the indigenous population is defending its ancestral lands upset the local authorities, who support the hydroelectric project.

The news coverage provided by community radio stations is particularly important in Guatemala, especially in rural and indigenous areas, where their reporting is accessible to the population and focused on local issues.

However, Guatemala's media legislation favours the established media at the expense of community radio stations, especially since [the adoption of a new telecommunications law in 2012, which endorsed the concentration of media ownership in few hands.](#)

It allowed media outlets with previously allocated broadcast frequencies to renew them almost automatically for another 20 years but failed to address the irregular situation of community radio stations, which find it almost impossible to obtain legal frequencies.

Regarded as "pirates" by the authorities and telecommunication networks, community radio stations are very vulnerable and are permanently exposed to the [possibility of closure](#) or seizure of their equipment.

Support the reopening of Santa Eulalia's community radio station by signing this [petition](#).

Guatemala is ranked [129th out of 180 countries in the 2015 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index.](#)

