

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/venezuela-call-for-immediate-release-of-15-11-2011,41397.html>

Americas - Venezuela

Conditional release

Court urged to acquit editor after releasing him conditionally

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Reporters Without Borders is relieved to learn that **Leocenis García**, the editor of the weekly *Sexto Poder*, has been released conditionally after being held for nearly three months for publishing a photomontage on its front cover in August that made fun of six leading women members of the government.

García had been on hunger strike for the past two weeks to press for his release and the withdrawal of the charges against him.

"The judicial authorities have finally seen reason and granted García a conditional release," Reporters Without Borders said. "He should never have been detained. We hope he and *Sexto Poder* publisher **Dinorah Girón** will now be acquitted on the charges of inciting hatred, insulting officials and offending women, which bear no relation to the offending cartoon.

"The photomontage may well have been of doubtful taste but there was absolutely no question of any criminal intention towards the persons it portrayed. The court must recognize that the charges are out of all proportion."

15.11.11 - Call for immediate release of jailed editor, now on hunger strike

Leocenis García, the editor of the weekly *Sexto Poder*, has been on hunger strike for the past week in protest against his detention since 30 August on charges of inciting hatred, insulting officials and offending women by publishing a controversial cartoon of senior female officials on the cover. His lawyer told Reporters Without Borders that García intends to continue the hunger strike until [the charges are dropped](#). The defence meanwhile intends to file a new petition in the next few days.

"We cannot encourage García to put his health or life in danger and we therefore urge him to abandon this hunger strike," Reporters Without Borders said. "But we join him in denouncing the absurdity of these proceedings and the misuse of preventive detention in the case of a man who turned himself in to the authorities. The way he is being treated flouts the most elementary legal principles including the presumption of innocence that applies to every person."

Reporters Without Borders is concerned to see no sign of any move by the government to defuse the current polarization, in which only media that do not support the government are the target of administrative measures.

Using its powers under article 182 of the Telecommunications Organic Law, the National Telecommunications Commission (CONATEL) ordered the closure of five radio stations in the western state of Zulia – *Titán*, *Coquivacoa*, *Kalor*, *Romance* and *Machiques Stereo* – and had their broadcast equipment seized on 3 November for alleged "clandestine and illegal use of the radio waves."

Radio *Kalor* owner José Ramón Socorro said CONATEL's representatives came with 50 members of the National Guard and stormed into the station "at the every moment that programmes critical of the government's performance were being broadcast."

Luis Domingo Alvarez, news and opinion director of the Center AM and FM radio network, recently pointed out that 250 radio stations are currently unable to broadcast because they have been placed under a CONATEL moratorium, and more than a thousand other radio stations could soon follow suit because they are using frequencies that have been deemed illegal.

Reporters Without Borders is concerned about the proposed "People's Power Communication Law" that is to be debated in the National Assembly.

"Is the intention really to restructure the media landscape in a balanced manner as other countries in the region have done," Reporters Without Borders asked. "Or, when they talk of 'People's Power Media,' do they mean those broadcast media that will be assigned a frequency because their editorial content finds favour? That is the issue."

The privately-owned TV news station *Globovisión* has meanwhile announced that it will file a new appeal before an administrative court in the next few days against [the 2-million-dollar fine](#) it received on 18 October for its coverage of a prison riot last June, which was deemed to have justified criminal activity and disrupted public order. The size of the fine threatens the station's survival.
