

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/honduras-unprecedented-wave-of-arrests-in-29-05-2012,42685.html>

Americas - Honduras

Unparalleled arrests

Unprecedented wave of arrests in radio journalist's murder

29 May 2012

Five alleged members of a gang suspected of abducting and murdering radio *HRN* journalist [Alfredo Villatoro](#) were arrested in a police raid in Cofradía, in the northern department of Cortés, on 27 May. The arrests bring to 10 the number of people now charged in connection with the murder of Villatoro, whose body was found on 15 May.

The latest arrests came two days after major demonstrations by media and journalists' organizations in five Honduran cities in protest against impunity for acts of violence against media personnel.

"We take note of the speed with which the authorities are investigating this murder, which has shaken public opinion," Reporters Without Borders said. "The significance of such a determined police operation should not however divert attention from the need to carefully establish all the circumstances surrounding Villatoro's murder and the role of all those involved.

"We call on the authorities to deploy the same resources in the 28 other – mostly unsolved – murders of journalists which, according to the National Human Rights Commission (CONADEH) have taken place since 2003 (23 of them since the June 2009 coup), and in all the other cases of people who have paid with their lives for providing information, including human rights activists, lawyers, and representatives of NGOs and community organizations."

Aged 15 to 29, those arrested in the 27 May raid were named as Edgar Francisco and Osman Fernando Osorio (two brothers), Marvin Alonso Gómez, Xiomara Flores Bú and a teenage girl whose identity was not released. They finally surrendered to the police after mediation by *Canal 6* journalist **Edy Andino**. The three men have so far been charged with criminal association and illegal carriage of firearms.

Two sisters, Jessica and Katlin Zambrano, and their cousin, Marvin Enrique Oliva, were arrested a few days after the discovery of Villatoro's body on charges of abduction and complicity. And two prison inmates, Juan Ramón Fonseca and Miguel Ángel Álvarez, have also been linked to the case. Álvarez, a police officer, is alleged to have conducted ransom negotiations with the Villatoro family by mobile phone from his prison cell.

According to the Committee for Free Expression (C-Libre), a Reporters Without Borders partner organization, suspects were arrested in two other cases in March. Former police officer David Lanza Valdez was arrested in Cortés department in connection with the August 2010 murder of journalist [Israel Zelaya Díaz](#). And in Colón department, Gabriel Menocal Vargas was arrested for the murder of journalist [Fausto Elio Hernández](#), who was hacked to death with a machete on 11 March of this year.

But the investigation into the murder of journalist [David Meza Montesinos](#) in March 2010 in La Ceiba has ground to a halt since the main suspect was released at the end of 2011.
