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Americas - Honduras

Airwaves censored

Honduran radio program taken off air after pressure from city's mayor

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The program "Noticiero Independiente" (Independent News), broadcast by Radio Estereo Castilla in Trujillo, was taken off the air on 20 August as a result of pressure from the city's mayor.

In a statement issued by the Committee for Freedom of Expression on 18 August, the presenter **Miguel Dubon** reported the efforts of the mayor of Trujillo to censor his program. The journalist said the electricity was cut off regularly at the time the broadcast, known for its criticism of the local government, was scheduled.

Two days later, the radio station's manager told Dubon that "Noticiero Independiente", which had been broadcast for 12 years, was being cancelled as a result of pressure from the local authorities and from a representative of the National Telecommunications Commission. According to Dubon, a city councillor had put pressure on the manager of *Radio Estereo Castilla*.

"I want to ask you a favour," he quoted the councillor as saying. "You will fire that son of a bitch from the station. If you get rid of him, the mayor will make sure you are paid 7,000 lempiras. If you don't, then they will close down the station."

"Reporters Without Borders demands the immediate reinstatement of the program 'Noticiero Independiente'," said Camille Soulier, head of the organization's Americas Desk. *"A serious and independent investigation must be carried out to determine whether the manager of Radio Estereo Castilla was the target of coercion by local officials. It is deplorable that the authorities respond to criticism of their administration by attacking journalists and news organizations."*

These revelations occur as the Honduran government has given a clear sign that it means to silence critical voices. Dubon is also a correspondent for *Radio Globo*, one of the country's most listened-to opposition broadcasters ever since the January 2009 coup.

The media group *Radio y TV Globo* is under threat of closure since its head [David Romero Ellner](#) recently became the target of several lawsuits. He was accused last month of criminal libel, a crime punishable by up to 15 years' imprisonment.

TV Globo journalist [Julio Ernesto Alvarado](#) was sentenced to 16 months in prison in December last year for criminally defaming Belinda Flores, the former economics faculty dean at the Autonomous University of Honduras. Although his sentence was reduced to a fine, the penalty was clearly disproportionate and the case has been referred to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

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