

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/honduras-rwb-encourages-honduras-to-step-up-19-06-2014,46476.html>

Americas - Honduras

Signs of progress

RWB encourages Honduras to step up efforts to combat impunity

19 June 2014

Reporters Without Borders hails the life sentences that a Tegucigalpa court passed on 11 June on three men for radio presenter Alfredo Villatoro's abduction and murder in 2012. While the sentences constitute an advance in the fight against impunity, RWB urges the authorities to establish effective measures to protect journalists.

The three men – Marvin Alonso Gómez and two brothers, Osman Fernando and Edgar Francisco Osorio Argujo – were convicted on 24 March of “[aggravated abduction](#).” Kidnapped from his home on 9 May 2012, Villatoro was [found dead](#) near Tegucigalpa eight days later.

In another encouraging development for freedom of information, the Honduran parliament approved a bill for the protection of journalists on first reading on 4 June. Although the text of the bill has not yet been made public, it provides for a mechanism for protecting human rights defenders, judicial officials, journalists and “social communicators” (community media, bloggers and netizens).

“We welcome the sentences passed on Villatoro’s murders and we hope this bill will help to prevent such crimes from recurring,” said Camille Soulier, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Americas desk. *“We encourage the Honduran authorities to include civil society, especially human rights groups, as much as possible in the discussion of this bill.”*

The protection mechanism will have two aspects, one preventive and one for protecting those in danger. The measures include monitoring by mobile phone network or satellite, camera installation, the loan of bulletproof vests and assigning bodyguards.

These measures are long overdue in Honduras, which has one of the world’s highest murder rates and where journalists are often the targets of threats and violence.

In one of the latest cases, Miguel Callejas, a city hall official in the northwestern city of Cholomas, threatened to kill local TV journalist **Alex Sabillón** on 16 June. The presenter of the programme Hechos de Choloma on Multicanal TV, Sabillón often covers murders in the region.

Callejas told Sabillón he was not impressed by the police bodyguards he had been assigned. “I don’t give a damn that you have policemen with you, you son of bitch, we are going to kill you,” he said. Callejas has threatened and insulted Sabillón in the past and, on 23 May, unidentified individuals went to Sabillón’s home to photograph him.

Reporters Without Borders hopes that the existing judicial provisions will be able to provide Sabillón will real protection and ensure that these threats are punished.

RWB also hopes that the proposed new law takes account of all news and information providers, including those working for community media, who are often the targets of threats and violence, especially when defending indigenous rights and campaigns to recover land.

The antenna of *Puca Opalaca*, a community radio station based in the eastern Intibucá region that is an offshoot of the Civic Council of Honduran Popular and Indigenous Organizations (COPINH), was damaged on 30 May.

[La Voz de Zacate Grande](#), a community radio that is the mouthpiece of the Zacate Grande Land Recovery Movement in the south of the country, was forcibly closed by 300 military policemen

on 3 June 2010 for the alleged illegal occupation of land owned by Miguel Facussé Barjum, a businessman that the station has often accused of abuses. He is on the Reporters Without Borders list of "[predators of press freedom](#)."

Honduras is ranked 129th out of 180 countries in the 2014 Reporters Without Borders [press freedom index](#).

Other images



JPEG - 153.1 kb
633 x 222 pixels
