

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/honduras-one-opposition-journalist-26-09-2011,41054.html>

Americas - Honduras

Dangerous information

One opposition journalist threatened, another pursued by coup general

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The concern that Reporters Without Borders expressed about Honduras' [readmission](#) to the Organization of American States is as relevant as ever after the emergence of new media cases involving two TV journalists – **Mario Castro Rodríguez** and **Edgardo Antonio Escoto Amador** – who opposed the June 2009 coup and who have information about it.

"The Cartagena Accord is dead and national reconciliation is impossible if censorship, repression and murder continue to be the response to needed information about the coup and its continuing consequences," Reporters Without Borders said. "The relative protection that Mario Castro is getting and Edgardo Escoto should be granted is necessary but not enough. These cases must be investigated thoroughly even if senior active or retired police and army officers are involved turn out to be implicated."

"The OAS and the rest of the international community should quickly remind the Honduran authorities of their duty to combat impunity. In this regard, we regret the postponement of the visit by Margaret Sekaggya, the UN special rapporteur for human rights defenders, which was supposed to take place from 27 September to 4 October. It must rescheduled before the end of the year."

100 threats

Producer of the programme "El látigo contra la Corrupción" (Lashing Corruption) for *Globo TV* in Tegucigalpa, Castro told the Committee for Free Expression (C-Libre), Reporters Without Borders' Honduran partner, that he has received around 100 messages since 8 September warning him of his imminent death. Although he and his brother, fellow journalist **Edgardo Castro**, are receiving government protection at the request of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, he fears for his safety and even his life.

Mario Castro is a supporter of the Broad Resistance Front (FARP), the party formed by deposed president Manuel Zelaya after he was allowed to return to Honduras in May. [Radio Globo and Globo TV](#) were harassed and censored during the months after the coup because of their support for Zelaya.

"It would be great if they bump you off, you bunch of pigs," "They should shoot you all," "Let them kill you all, you scum" and "Ha, ha, ha, they kill idiots, you dope" are just some of the messages that Castro has repeatedly received from different numbers. Some allude to his poor relations with the police. Heavily-armed masked men have often waited for Castro outside *Globo TV* and have followed him home in a white vehicle with tinted windows and no number plate.

One of the distinguishing features of the programme which the Castro brothers have been producing and hosting since May 2010 has been its coverage of alleged corruption under President Roberto Micheletti, who took over after the June 2009 and governed until January 2010. It has also covered other sensitive stories including the militarization of the north-central Aguán region, where peasant communities and movements have been the victims of serious human rights violations.

[Medardo Flores](#), a journalist with *Radio Uno* in San Pedro Sula who was murdered on 8

September, was also a FARP supporter. He was the 15th journalist to be murdered in the past 18 months. None of these murders has been solved

Compromising information

Edgardo Escoto, the coordinator of the programme "Themes and Debates" on *Canal 13* TV in Tegucigalpa, is also being threatened. Two men on a motorcycle with large-calibre handguns intercepted him near his home on the night of 22 September and took his laptop computer. He told C-Libre that the computer contained "confidential information about the coup that had been passed to me and other journalists several months ago and which irritated Retired General Miguel Ángel García Padgett."

Escoto added that he had repeatedly been threatened and followed after refusing to yield to pressure from people who said they had been sent by Gen. García Padgett.

García Padgett was one of the four generals on manoeuvres during the coup on 28 June 2009. One of his colleagues, [Romeo Vásquez Velásquez](#), was appointed head of the national telecommunications company Hondutel on 8 March 2010, when he retired from the army. Escoto has been arrested several times since the coup.
