

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/honduras-women-journalists-terrorized-24-01-2012,41761.html>

Americas - Honduras

Unending nightmare

Women journalists terrorized, peasant spokesman gunned down in Aguán

24 January 2012

Gilda Silvestrucci (photo) has become the latest member of the "Journalists for Life and Free Expression" collective to get threatening phone calls, following [Itsmania Pineda Platero](#), who received a series of threatening calls earlier this month.

The two women, along with a number of other journalists, organized a march on 13 December that was violently dispersed outside the presidential palace in Tegucigalpa. The purpose of their march was to protest against free speech violations and impunity for those responsible.

Silvestrucci has been constantly followed ever since she and 14 other women members of the collective filed a complaint against President Porfirio Lobo Sosa, armed forces chief of staff Gen. René Osorio Canales and presidential guard chief Gen. Andrés Felipe Díaz a week after the march.

"We are in constant contact with this collective and we propose to set up a permanent alert system for its threatened representatives," Reporters Without Borders said. "We urge them to share with us all the evidence, including recordings or statements, that could support the complaint they filed on 21 December. We reiterate that we hold the authorities directly responsible for the lives of these women journalists and those close to them."

Silvestrucci received a call on her mobile phone yesterday morning from an unidentified individual who told her: "We know that you have three children, that the oldest is 15, that at this moment you are walking down the street with your seven-year-old son and that the oldest is at home looking after the one-year-old baby, and we are going to kill you."

Three days earlier, Silvestrucci's mother received a call from someone trying to find about Silvestrucci's timetable, her movements, the places she frequents and the number of her mobile phone.

Silvestrucci edits the online newspaper [El Patriota](#) and produces "En la plaza," a programme broadcast every weekday morning on *Radio Globo*. She had just finished yesterday morning's programme, about a controversial mining bill currently before parliament, when she received the call threatening her and her children.

Both of the news media she works for voiced their opposition to the June 2009 coup d'état from the outset. The coup started a crackdown that has never stopped.

Unnoticed mass killings

A total of 24 journalists have been killed in Honduras in the past decade, [17 of them since the coup](#). The police and judicial authorities have had little success in investigating any of these cases. Murders of citizens who provided information to the media or defended human rights and media pluralism also go unpunished.

The latest victim in this category is Matías Valle, 55, a peasant community leader who was gunned down by two men on a motorcycle at a bus stop in the northern depart of Colón on 20 January, three days after the murder of [Ricardo Rosales](#), a lawyer who had accused police in the northern town of Tela of serious human rights violations.

Valle was a leading representative of the Aguán United Peasant Movement (MUCA), a group based in Aguán, a northern region racked by violent land disputes between agro-industrial companies and local peasant communities that has been under military control since 2010.

He had repeatedly denounced the constant and often deadly harassment of the region's peasant inhabitants. The Committee for Free Expression (C-Libre), a Reporters Without Borders partner organization, said that, because of the risks he took in talking to the media, he should in principle have been a beneficiary of "protective measures".

"If these protective measures had been properly implemented, Valle would not have been waiting alone at a bus stop and at the mercy of his killers," Reporters Without Borders said. "His death must be added to the toll of the mass killings taking place out of sight in Aguán. At the very least, an international commission of enquiry with very broad powers should be dispatched to this region."

Reporters Without Borders pays tribute to Valle and to his personal courage in providing badly needed information about what has been taking place in Aguán.
