

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/honduras-journalist-suspends-popular-radio-18-03-2013,44225.html>

---

Americas - Honduras

Intimidation leads to self-censorship

## Journalist suspends popular radio programme amid mounting threats

18 March 2013

---

Reporters Without Borders is very worried about **Julio Ernesto Alvarado**, the producer of the current affairs programmes "Medianoche" on Tegucigalpa-based *Radio Globo* and "Mi Nación" on its sister TV station, *Globo TV*, because of a recent increase in the threats and acts of intimidations against him that began a year ago.

Alvarado, 60, who is vice-president of the Organization of Ibero-American Journalists, told the Honduran Committee for the Families of Disappeared Detainees (COFADEH) on 5 March that he has suspended "Medianoche" as a result of the threats (see document below).

Reporters Without Borders urges the authorities to take the threats seriously and to carry out an investigation with the aim of identifying those responsible.

Alvarado said that "suspicious" vehicles with occupants who looked like "hit-men" pulled up outside the premises of *Radio Globo* and *Globo TV* shortly before midnight on 1 March and one of the vehicles entering the building's car park while he was on the air.

Later that night, an unidentified individual went up inside the building with the apparent aim of scouting it out, and then left. The building's security guards said it was clear that the intruders intended to go back in order to carry out an attack on Alvarado.

Similar incidents occurred during the days that followed. Suspicious individuals and vehicles were again seen outside *Radio Globo* and *Globo TV*. In some cases, these individuals asked where Alvarado was.

Such threatening behaviour is not new. Alvarado's car was vandalized on 14 March 2012 with the apparent aim of intimidating him, because nothing was stolen, except a very small camera. Since then, cars without licence plates have often been seen driving by *Radio Globo* and, on several occasions, men on motorcycles have followed Alvarado.

Alvarado played down the importance of the threats in the past, but a climate of fear has now taken hold of the *Radio Globo* and *Globo TV* staff and he has had to suspend "Medianoche," a popular programme that had been broadcast every weekday night since January 2011.

Alvarado has often criticized the police and armed forces in his programme, which has many listeners. On 1 March, he criticized the behaviour of police director general Juan Carlos Bonilla, also known as "El Tigre," who is alleged to have been implicated in several murders including that of Ricardo Ramírez Umaña, the 17-year-old son of Ricardo Ramírez del Cid, Bonilla's predecessor as head of the police.

Last year, "Medianoche" criticized Bonilla in connection with the slowness of the investigation into a fire that killed 361 inmates at Comayagua prison. Alvarado's car was vandalized later on the day that this criticism was broadcast.

Although the identity of those responsible for these acts of intimidation has not been

established with any certainty, Alvarado thinks they could be policemen, in particular, members of units responsible for special operations.

Threats against media are common in Honduras. **Pedro Canales**, a journalist with *La Voz de Zacate Grande*, a community radio station in the southern municipality of Amapala, received a [death threat](#) a week ago. The radio has been [harassed](#) in the past because of its coverage of land conflicts in the Amapala area.

Local businessman landowner [Miguel Facussé Barjum](#) is alleged to have hired contract killers in Amapala, where vehicles with tinted windows and no licence plates are often seen circulating.

Honduras is ranked 127th out of 179 countries in the 2013 Reporters Without Borders [press freedom index](#).

Testimony of Julio Ernesto Alvarado to the COFADEH, on 5 March 2013 :

