

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/honduras-journalist-and-rights-activist-09-05-2012,42590.html>

Americas - Honduras

Grim sequel

Kidnapped radio journalist Alfredo Villatoro found shot dead

16 May 2012

Radio journalist **Alfredo Villatoro**, kidnapped on his way to work last week, was found dead yesterday on the outskirts of Tegucigalpa six days after his abduction.

"With the death of **Erick Martínez** on 5 May and that of Alfredo Villatoro, journalism has lost two of its members in the space of 10 days, while at the same time threats, attacks and assaults remain an almost daily reality for journalists," Reporters Without Borders said.

"Against this background, where common crime, the activities of criminal gangs and political violence undermine national security and basic public freedoms, no attempt to combat impunity can succeed without wide-ranging reform of the judicial system involving civil society and international observers. It is a daunting challenge but one that cannot be put off any longer."

Villatoro, programme co-ordinator and presenter at the radio station HRN, was shot twice in the head and his body had been dressed in the uniform of an officer of the police, which is widely suspected of being behind serious breaches of human rights.

Shortly before the grim discovery, Honduran President Porfirio Lobo made reference to clues that the journalist was still alive. This was later denied by the security minister, Pompeyo Bonilla.

The death brings to 26 the number of journalists killed in Honduras in the past decade, 20 of them in the period immediately after the June 2009 coup d'état. Honduras, together with Mexico and Colombia, is among the most dangerous countries in the hemisphere for journalists.

09.05.12 - Journalist and rights activist found dead

Reporters Without Borders calls on the authorities to render justice in the murder of **Erick Martínez Ávila**, a 32-year-old opposition journalist and gay rights activist whose body was found at the side of the road between Tegucigalpa and Olancho on 7 May, two days after his family reported him missing. Local officials said he appeared to have been strangled.

A spokesman for Kukulcán, an organization that defends lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights, Martínez had recently registered as a would-be candidate to be a parliamentary representative of the opposition party, Libre, which is to hold primaries in November.

Libre is the political wing of the National People's Resistance Front, which former President Manuel Zelaya created after he was ousted in a June 2009 coup.

"Because of his activities and his commitment, Martínez was a marked man for the enemies of human rights and pluralism in Honduras, where 27 journalists have been killed in the past decade, 20 of them since the coup," Reporters Without Borders said. "His case recalls the December 2009 murder of fellow journalist and gay rights activist Walter Tróchez, which is still unpunished.

"Who will conduct the investigation into Martínez's murder? When will it start? Will Honduran

society carry out a much-needed debate about the causes he defended? His murder constitutes an attack not only on journalism but on all those who are involved in defending fundamental freedoms in Honduras.

“Recalling the requests we made when the Organization of American States readmitted Honduras in June 2011, we continue to support the principle of an international commission of enquiry to shed light on the most serious human rights violations that have taken place in recent years, including this one.”

Reporters Without Borders has just learned that HRN radio journalist and coordinator **Alfredo Villatoro** was kidnapped by gunmen while on his way to work this morning in Tegucigalpa. A search has been launched and we hope that he is found safe and sound quickly.
