

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/honduras-downward-spiral-continues-for-06-03-2015,47656.html>

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Americas - Honduras

Situation report

## Downward spiral continues for Honduran media

6 March 2015

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**The first two months of 2015 have very disturbing for journalists in Honduras. Five years after a 2009 coup d'état, it is [still one of the western hemisphere's most dangerous countries for media personnel](#) and [respect for freedom of information continues to decline](#).**

The climate for news providers is extremely hostile. Journalists and media are the targets of [threats](#), judicial harassment, physical violence and [murder](#). According to the National Commission for Human Rights (CONADEH), all but two of the 51 murders of journalists registered since 2003 are still unpunished.

Journalists who cover violence, human rights violations, corruption and organized crime (including organized crime's infiltration of the state) are especially exposed to reprisals.

The impunity is particularly worrying given the hostility that the authorities – including those at the highest level – display towards the media. Far from guaranteeing journalists' safety, they tend to minimize the danger by denying that the journalists who have been murdered were targeted in connection with their work.

For example, after *Radio Globo* journalist **Erick Arriaga's** murder on 23 February, the authorities claimed that he had links to criminal gangs. *"We condemn the attitude of the Honduran authorities towards journalists as completely unacceptable,"* said Claire San Filippo, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Americas desk.

*"Not only do they do nothing in response to crimes of violence against journalists, failing to solve almost all of these crimes, but they constantly jeopardize journalists' work. Journalists who criticize the government are denied access to state-held information, subjected to unjustified prosecutions and threatened by officials."*

San Filippo added: *"When will the state stop gagging news and information, assume its role as guarantor of rights, and provide journalists with real protection? In the absence of protection and justice, must Honduran journalists either censor themselves or live in fear of violence and persecution?"*

### Opposition media hounded

The government makes no bones about its desire to control the media and gag critics, targeting community media and opposition media such as *Radio Globo* and *Canal 36* in particular. They are constantly threatened, their access to state-held information is restricted, and they are subjected to judicial harassment designed to deter investigative reporting.

The accreditation of critical journalists with state agencies or for major events has become problematic. For example, *Radio Globo* director **David Romero** and fellow journalist **Rony Martínez** were denied access to a meeting of the presidents of Honduras, Salvador and Guatemala on 26 February.

Reporting in the National Congress is also being subjected to growing restrictions. *Globo Noticias Honduras* reporter **César Silva** and Reporters Without Borders correspondent **Dina Meza** seem to be among the personae non gratae. Reporters Without Borders wrote to the congressional speaker about this problem on 9 December but has received no reply.

The Honduran state's behaviour violates the position of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), which has said: "*Access to information held by the state is a fundamental right of every individual. States have the obligation to guarantee the full exercise of this right.*"

In the course of their judicial harassment of the media, the authorities defied an IACHR request on 5 November to refrain from implementing [a court ruling – originally issued in December 2013 – that bans TV Globo presenter Julio Ernesto Alvarado from working as a journalist for 16 months](#). The ruling was issued in a defamation suit brought by the former economics faculty dean at the Autonomous National University of Honduras.

Reporters Without Borders is particularly disturbed by the overt hostility that officials display towards critical media. On 26 January, for example, an army officer who heads congressional speaker Mauricio Oliva's security detail and who is a member of the presidential guard of honour told César Silva that he could end up "gagged in ditch."

Marvin Ponce, an advisor to President Juan Orlando Hernández, insulted and slapped David Romero in the face in a *Radio Globo* studio on 30 January, after threatening him by telephone. The day before, Romero was followed by police chief Héctor Iván Mejía Velásquez.

Community radio stations such as *Radio Coco Dulce* and *La Voz de Zacate Grande* continue to be very vulnerable because of the broadcasting legislation still in effect in Honduras, which is a long way from allocating community radio stations the 33 percent of frequencies recommended by the IACHR and Reporters Without Borders.

*La Voz de Puca*, a community radio station in La Asomada (in the southwestern department of Lempira), was the target of an attempted police raid on 22 January. Last year, one of its programmes criticized the president and his wife.

Honduras is ranked 132nd out of 180 countries in the [Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#).

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