

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/ecuador-presidential-attacks-on-17-07-2012,43046.html>

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Americas - Ecuador

No concession

## Presidential attacks on journalists follow another radio station closure

17 July 2012

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Guayaquil-based *Radio Morena FM 98.1* has been off the air since 6 July following the confiscation of its broadcasting equipment in a major operation. Owned by opposition politician Luis Almeida, it is [the 17th broadcast media](#) to be forced to close in Ecuador since the start of the year.

As in the other cases, controversy surrounds the reasons for its closure and the way it was carried out. The station's representatives say it was the victim of politically motivated "persecution." The National Telecommunications Secretariat (SENATEL) – which is the competent government agency and which used to be called CONATEL – insists that *Radio Morena* was closed down simply because it failed to pay for its frequency concession in time.

"We are concerned either way," Reporters Without Borders said. "If it is correct that *Radio Morena* was late in paying its dues, why was it closed down without waiting until all possible avenues of appeal had been exhausted? There was a legal and even constitutional requirement to respect due process. The confiscation of its equipment – which the station owned, unlike its frequency – reinforces our suspicions about the procedure used.

"We call for a complete revision of the frequency allocation system and the way the agency in charge of it functions. This was already recommended by a group of experts who were consulted in 2009 at the request of President Rafael Correa himself. A thorough reform is needed urgently and should be on the agenda of a new debate on [the communication law](#)."

The wave of closures of broadcast media – mostly stations critical of the government – is all the more controversial because President Correa has been stepping up his personal attacks on opposition journalists.

**Gustavo Cortez**, the editor of the daily [El Universo](#), was the target of violent harangues by the president during four of his recent weekly addresses, which are broadcast on most of the state radio and TV stations every Saturday.

Brandished a photo of Cortez on 14 July, Correa publicly urged his supporters to "react" against him (see below). **César Ricaurte**, the head of the free speech NGO Fundamedios, was the target of a similar attack during a Saturday address last month.

"We condemned the excesses of certain privately-owned media when the circumstances required in the past, but what are we to make of the pardon that President Correa gave *E! Universo* on 27 February if he now embarks on more hostilities?" Reporters Without Borders said.

"The president has a duty to guarantee national harmony and not brand fellow citizens on the air as 'enemies of the country.' When a democratically-elected president insists on respect for himself and his position, it is reasonable to assume that he will accord his detractors and opponents the same respect. In this case, personal attacks have also endangered the safety of those targeted."

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